THE ADVENTURES IN MODERN MUSIC

WIRE

DOUBLE ISSUE 190/191 · NEW YEAR 2000 · £3·10

Mark Perry
The retuning of Alternative TV

Angus MacLise
The Velvets' revolutionary

Worship the glitch
In praise of sonic turbulence

99 rewind
Records of the year

Caetano Veloso's *jukebox*

Matt Herbert

Jessica Balliff

DJ Scud

Ian MacDonald on
Giya Kancheli

On record
Sonic Youth
Mos Def
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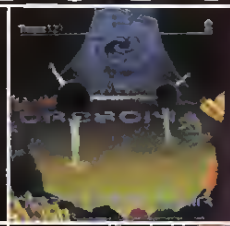
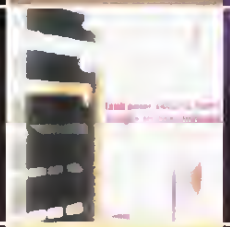


DREXCIYA
'DEPTHS'S LAIR'
(TRESOR)
The first offshoots of the nebulous Detroit techno / electro outfit Drexciya began in 1991, forming close ties with UNDERGROUND RESISTANCE and DERMERGE. 21 all new and exclusive tracks. " A timely reminder that electronic music can still sound emotive, funky and futuristic in equal parts. A triumphant return." Df

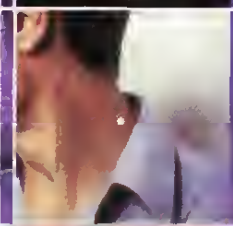
KIT CLAYTON
'NEW OWNFALET'
(BUDPE)
Debut album on Stefan Betke's (aka Pole) label Scape . 8 tracks of dark, minimal techdub from San Francisco's Kit Clayton who recently had techno single of the month in Jockey Slut. Forthcoming : BURNT FRIEDMANN AND THE DEW DUB PLAYERS 12" (out end Jan.) and album "Just Landed" (Feb).

VARIOUS ARTISTS
'A.R.S.E. REMIXES'
(FAT BAT)
Alias of the anonymous Berlin producers behind some of the most stunning, immersive electronics of recent years with releases on Chain Reaction, Rio and Fat Cat. Includes singles plus re - interpretations by AUTECHRE, FUNKSTORUNG, POLE, MOODLAKE, and ANDVANE. Also out now: IMMENSE LP and, in Jan., a Split Series comp. CD (with incl. Merzbow)

VARIOUS ARTISTS
'SOUND ONE TO SOUND FIVE'
(MAIN STREET)
Awesome, long awaited comp. from BASIC CHANNEL offshoot MAIN STREET. Compiling edited and remastered versions of the 5 ep's released over the last 7 years; SOUND ONE (as Quadrant dub), SOUND TWO , SOUND THREE - 1st collaboration between R.D. and TIRIMAN, SOUND FOUR,SOUND FIVE - mellow Rhythm & Sound vibes.



LAUB
'INTUITION REMIXES'
(KITTY YO)
Includes remixes by JONATHAN MOORE (COLDCUT), TARWATER, SCHNEIDER TM, POLE, GONZALES, GILBERTO, MATTHIAS SCHAFFHEUSER, STOL, BLOND, MAX SCHNEIDER and PHONEHEADS. Deluxe double vinyl and CD. Also out now and equally marvellous, GONZALES 12" and RAZ OHARA debut album.



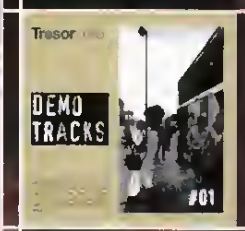
MICHAEL THOMAS
'BODY MINTYNG'
(LO DEBOBBINBU)
Michael Thomas returns with his second magnus opus "Sorry Martyrs", hot on the heels of his collaborative ep with Squarepusher (NME Single Of The Week). An electronic jazz folk kidscope of car boot sale electronics, Soo Ha space jazz and Astrud Gilberto coffee table muzak.

UI
'THE IRON APPLE'
(SOUTHERN)
New York's finest abstract funkateers return from a brief recording sabbatical with a new EP to quash rumours of their untimely demise. Two new songs and three remixes show that UI's unique mix of beats and basses has lost none of its edge.

THE THIRD WAVE
'NEVE WAS NIW'
(CRIPPLED DICK BOY WAX)
One of the most searched for MPS releases.Brilliant vocal jazz pop arranged and conducted by George Duke reminiscent of the Mamas & Papas offspring / early Kings Sisters. Ltd vinyl in heavyweight packaging with original quater.

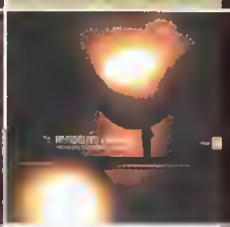
SCHNEUHEM
'(41'17" PRASENZ)'
(DEBUDE)
Debut album from Searcuhem including tracks recorded for Heimelektro plus new tracks and a video for 'First Day' made by Sky BBB from Cologne. Lazily compared to Warp and Duplex artists, Searcuhem Dava already created their own style of electronica for the next century.

TWISTED SCIENCE
'DEEP BOD WAHM'
(LO DEBOBBIBBU)
Twisted Science (aka Jon Tye) return with a deeply twisted but altogether more friendly album. A cut and paste collage that recalls the cinematic scope of DJ Shadow, the layered psychedelia of Jim B Rourke or Cornelius at his most abstract.



VARIOUS ARTISTS
'DEMO TRACKS 1999'
(TRESOR)
Demo Tracks 1999 is the first of its kind compilation in a forthcoming series representing a strong group of visionaries, many of the tracks are debut recordings, sent to Tresor on cassette, DAT's and CDR's during the course of '99. A variety of styles is featured from minimal to atmospheric clubtracks.

FREEFORM
'QUEEN PANK'
(DUB BDBO)
Dub album from Simon Pyke alias Freeform who has released critically acclaimed tracks for labels such as Warp, Sham, Warm Interface, Langaeng and Growl. Incredibly strange , groovy electronica, futuristic samba anthems, exotica and soundtracks.



VARIOUS ARTISTS
'HI FIDELITY LOUNGE VOLUME ONE'
(BBIIBBBE RECBBIIBBB)
Exploring the diverse spectrum of sounds emerging from backroom bars, restaurants and lounges of not giant's urban centres, DomaBeat masters JAZZABUM, BUDDED YRUNT, PAUL HUNTER, THIEBERY BORPORATION, THE MIGHTY BOP and more serve up a tantalizing mixture of soul, funk, jazz and Bossanova.

BOLOBDMO
'OEBO THIGNENT'
(BBBBBY)
Second Boldrums album for Kranky, previously compared to 80's practitioners like Donaman B, Main and Spiritualized as well as 70's prog merchants Popol Vuh and Pink Floyd Boldrums bring a new twist to the established conventions of space rock and Krautrock with their twin guitars and heavy percussive improvisation.

JEREMY BOYLE
'BBBOB FROM THE GUITAR SOLOB'
(HOBTREBB)
Elegantly sourced from the fretboards of various 70's guitar legends Jeremy's solo debut bears scant resemblance to any Monsters of Rock. Instead Joan Of Arc's computer-tech has created a series of multi-layered soundscapes closer to Eno and Cluster than Ozzy or Eddie Van Halen.

DJ T-1000
'PROGRESS'
(TREBBB)
DJ T1000 (aka ALAN BLOBAM) is a Detroit originat from way back. With admitted influences ranging from Massive Attack and Timbaland to June Bikins and Regis, Oldham's output has taken down the borders, combined the concepts and blended the elements into the autobiographical narrative that is 'Progress'.

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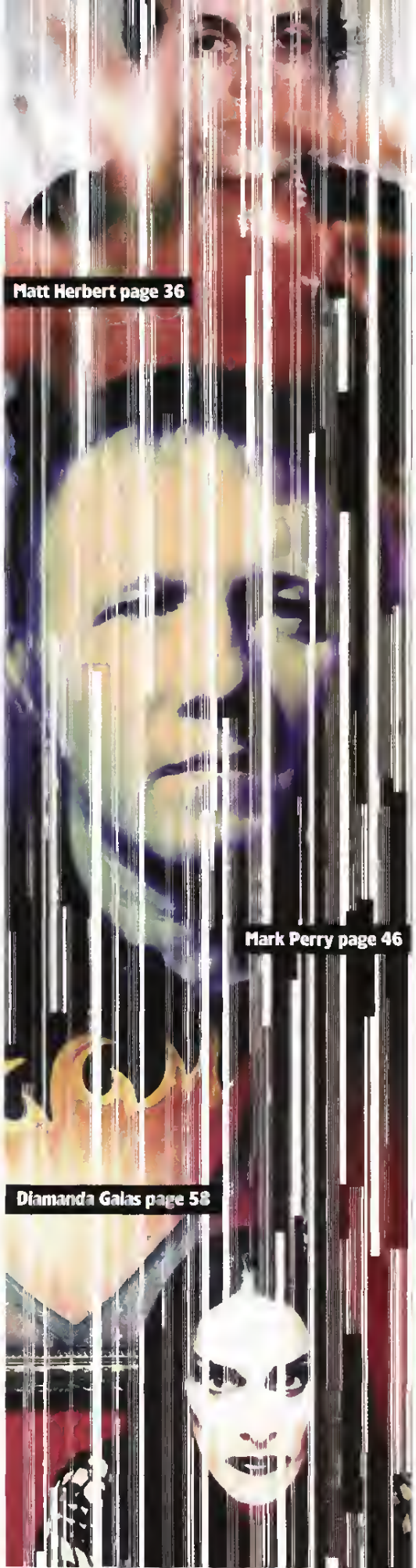

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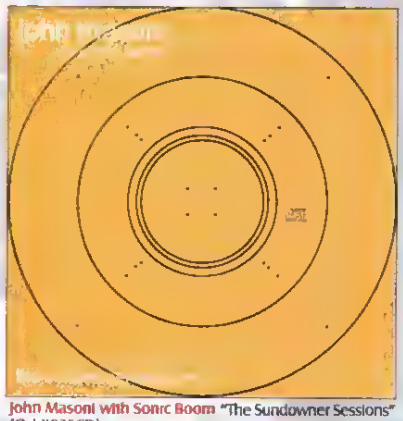

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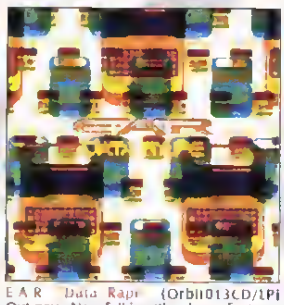

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Cover photo of Diamanda Galas in New York **Tim Kent**

Thanks this issue to Peter Shapiro and Edwin Pouncey

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editor's idea

All across the Western hemisphere, magazine editors (to pick just one strain of media worker) have been gearing up for this moment, their brains heating to a fever pitch as they calculate ever more spurious equations for summarising, in a few thousand words of deathless newsprint, the last 100, 1000 or even 2000 years of activity and endeavour as pertinent to their particular corner of the cultural universe.

It's bullshit, of course, this millennium thing, an arbitrary blip on a disputed calendar, and for our part, small and humble as it is, we have approached the 'problem' of Y2K by opting to sidestep it all together. Well, almost.

Imposing sharp divisions on a medium as fluid and mercurial as the kind of music which fills this magazine every month feels like a futile exercise. Just as you thought you were getting a handle on the thing, it will always run away from you, charging off down blind alleys, looping back to connect with unexpected or half-forgotten historical benchmarks, forging ahead into hitherto unknown realms, brokering unlikely alliances. And sometimes it even throws you just by staying put.

Having said that, throughout this year we have been indulging in our own spot of millennial stocktaking: our Undercurrents series attempted to nail down in 12 essays just some (not all) of the ideas, breakthroughs and innovations that have bubbled through various levels beneath the surface of the sonic century. Far from redundant, many of these ideas continue to percolate through the new music(s) that animate the contents of this magazine month in, month out.

The final piece in the Undercurrents series appears on page 52 of this double issue, in which Rob Young gets to grips with some of the musicians who are presently turning the technology of electronic music inside out, detecting in the process a crucial and historically sound socio-political dimension in what, on the face of it, can appear to be some of the most impenetrable and self-consciously ascetic and hermetic noises ever committed to tape.

Elsewhere, the bulk of the contents of this double issue seemed to cohere of their own accord, around a vague sensation that they somehow 'felt right' for such a 'momentous' end-of-one-century-beginning-of-another edition of the mag. In particular, the works of Giya Kancheli, Angus MacLise, and above all, this month's cover star, the utterly unique Diamanda Galas, all seemed to chime with the lowering fin de siecle mood.

For me personally, 1999 has been the most intense 12 month period yet at *The Wire*, certainly in terms of the amount of activity which the magazine got itself involved or implicated in (and that's in addition to producing another year's worth of the best Goddamn music zine on the planet). For instance: we relaunched our long dormant in-house label, The Wire Editions, with the release of Rhys Chatham's electric jazz/avant rock/breakbeat unification project, *Hard Edge*; we compiled two more volumes of *The Wire Tapper*, our ongoing series of new music compilation CDs, which are now given away free and exclusively to all the magazine's subscribers, and then co-ordinated three additional compilation CDs, which were again given away free to the magazine's readers and/or subscribers (*Live & Direct*, *Domino On The Wire* and *New Music From Central & Eastern Europe*); we promoted the final events in our *Interference* series of multimedia get-togethers, and launched *Current*, a peripatetic space for the commingling of live, programmed and DJed music, and then we got invited to curate, programme, co-promote or just plain appear at a further raft of international live events, including Battery Park in Cologne, Barcelona's SONAR festival, Impakt in Utrecht, Norway's Kongsberg Jazz Festival, Now99 in Nottingham and, finally, two nights of Adventures In Modern Music as part of the London Jazz Festival.

Did I miss anything? Probably, but I reckon that's quite enough for one year, so forgive me if I conk out at this point. We'll be back in the future.

TONY HERRINGTON

The next issue of *The Wire* to come your way will be the February 2000 edition

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letters

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Morphic resonance

I felt compelled to write in to say just how much Stewart Lee, in his article on Morphogenesis, seemed to hit the nail right on the head (Epiphanies, *The Wire* 189) I'm sure there are countless others who appreciate all kinds of esoteric music but still teeter on the brink of acceptance when it comes to all the more radical sounds being made in the John Cage tradition For me it has been a gradual development from listening purely to leftfield rock (which, like Lee, would still feature heavily on any all-time top 100 records list of mine) to being "caught somewhere between feeling conned and feeling converted" All I can say is that after reading the article I immediately slapped on a CD of Cage's *Cartridge Music* (featuring Takehisa Kosugi, Michael Pugliese and David Tudor), a disc in my collection which hasn't often seen the light of day My feelings then echoed exactly what Stewart Lee describes during the interval of the Morphogenesis gig, as the other sounds coming from elsewhere in the building began to take on an entirely new significance, no less important than the sounds coming from my speakers Now I'm converted
William Roberts *East Molesey, Surrey*

Registan righted

Thanks for the excellent article on Uzbekistan (Global Ear, *The Wire* 189) I'm afraid, though, that I've got to go in for a bit of pedantry Samarkand's Registan isn't "the magnificent, turquoise domed 15th century palace where Timur ruled over his empire" It is in fact an ensemble of three madrassehs (Islamic colleges), one built by Timur's grandson Ulug Beg around 1420, and the other two by a governor of Samarkand about a century later They're just as magnificent, but perhaps a bit less romantic than Patrick Newman made out

I hope lots of your readers will visit Uzbekistan, for the music, the people and the sights, and wish you all the best for your indispensible magazine
Paul Steeples *London*

The Fahey vanishes

So John Fahey played in London then (On Location, *The Wire* 189)? Hope everyone enjoyed it I got tickets to see him in Birmingham (provincial, I know), my girlfriend came over from Norway and I was getting really excited But the gig was cancelled and I was only notified a couple of days before So what I want to know is, do any of you out there know what has happened to Mr Fahey concerning the Birmingham date or is it simply that I was

Iggy idolatry

I thought I'd send a note to say what a great job Edwin Pouncey did with his Iggy Pop article (*The Wire* 189) I can't say I've ever come across such an illuminating feature on The Stooges' 'legend' There was nothing worse in the late 70s, in the advent of 'punk' (for want of a better phrase), when the likes of *NME* would wax lyrical, spreading the word of the Stooges/Iggy legacy — when they had nothing to say, just namedrop!

Two of the reasons why The Stooges had a resurgence at that time was due to The Damned's Brian James and the proto-Buzzcocks with Howard Devoto I remember an article in a magazine called *Music Scene* in late 1972 or early 73 which strangely only ran to about four issues — which proclaimed "The Men Who Influenced Bowie" One page was about Lou Reed, the other page was all about The Stooges The peanut butter was mentioned, but of course the article didn't say it was an "industrial sized jar" leaving me, as a confused 12 year old glam stomper, wondering how he smeared himself all over and some of the audience with a small jar of Sun-Pat

But seriously folks, the good thing about the feature was an insight into Iggy's experimental leanings — I've also read elsewhere that the debut show of The Stooges had him operating a Hoover! After all this time — as the man said — all those tracks still have a punch to the gut today and forever more!
Tim Jones *Manchester*

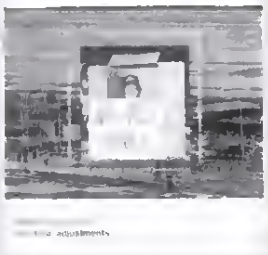
Burn note

I thought it quite fitting that Iggy Pop should mention Frank Sinatra's album *September Of My Years* The current CD issue of that album bears a printer's error (or piece of mischief) the inlay on one of the edges actually shows the title *September Of My Ars*, which, if the seat of Iggy's jeans (page 26) was a calendar, is exactly what we see
Paul Cox *Bury*

Iggy lets it all hang out in Miami

PHOTO FRANK BAUER

out on 1/2000



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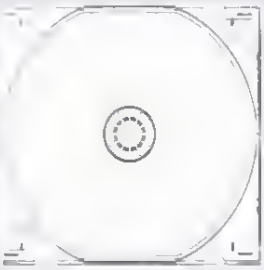

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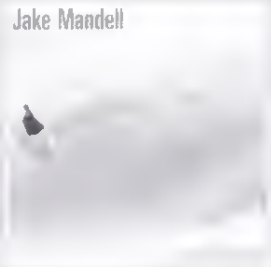
Kit Clayton, Terre Thaemlitz
and Vitney



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Undodam Current

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STURM | Sturmgesten

CRANK | Heftibag

AUTOPOIESES | La Vie a Trois

NEINA | formed verse

TERRE THAEMLTZ | Replicas Rubato

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the only person to buy tickets for it? Paranoid? Yes, but it makes you wonder doesn't it?

Secondly, I wondered if thee almighty *Wire* might spotlight a few of the underground cassette/record labels such as Betley Welcomes Careful Drivers (whose releases you've reviewed with praise), Garlik, Shrimper, *et al* There's a whole bunch of us out here doing stuff, and stuff can be pretty interesting!

Crayola *Telford*

As far as we are aware, there was a falling out between the promoters at the start of Fahey's UK tour which resulted in some dates being cancelled at the last minute — Ed

Ben bites back

Whoops, seems I was target of the month on November's Letters page (*The Wire* 1B9)! Apologies to John Szwed for mistaking his praise of Tony Oxley for criticism It's tricky deducing aesthetic judgments from densely-phrased mini-reviews, and I read a negative spin into "of the beat-is-everywhere-and-nowhere school" I thought it odd that Sun Ra's biographer should diss a founding free improvisor, so it's good to learn that Szwed deems Oxley one of the great drummers of the century

Thanks to Robin Kinross for disconnecting Studio Vista from *Studio International* in my review of Michael Nyman's reprinted *Experimental Music* I was drawing on teenage memories dimly recalled So sorry for that confusion too

However, no apologies to Roger Sutherland for his comments on the same review In a CD review in the same issue, Mark Sinker attacked the kind of experimental/avant garde distinction I made in my review of the Nyman book, but at least Sinker is listening widely and seeking to further the debate Issues of capital, copyright and claims-to-subversion require careful unpicking in every genre, but Sutherland is so wrapped up in documentation and promotion of certain wouldbe-avant practices, he cannot conceive of asking why do it at all? Do the results sound good? Maybe pop music is better than this stuff? (Questions *Wire* writers should never ignore) Sutherland's fiercely protective, fact-obsessed zeal is weirdly reminiscent of 'hardcore' Zappa-fandom — people who seize on obscure culture as a security blanket, and shriek with rage if anyone asks wider social questions about their chosen arcana Incapable of relating their musical choices to a wider context, they end up with a bitter mixture of anti-intellectualism and pedantry

But even Sutherland's beloved facts fail him he says my statement 'John Cage loathed Beethoven" was 'typically misleading" Well, sample Cage's 1948 lecture at the Black Mountain College "Was Beethoven right, or are Webern and Satie right? I answer immediately and unequivocably, Beethoven was in error, and his influence, which has been as extensive as it is lamentable, had been deadening to the art of music" Far from 'merely proposing an alternative musical architecture Cage was staging an avant garde scandal (a "*debâcle*" — David Revill *The Raging Silence*, page 161) He wasn't invited back to Black Mountain for three years Condemnations of Beethoven litter Cage's writings and interviews, and have had a deleterious effect on even the best American criticism (eg Susan McClary) So "loathe" is, I maintain, an apt description of Cage's complete and undialectical animadversion to the greatest bourgeois expression of enlightenment and freedom

Because I focus on Nyman's philosophy and politics, Sutherland accuses me of "trademark axe-grinding" and skim-reading Presumably he would have preferred a bald list of 'experimental music' procedures (Sutherland's own trademark) Pointing out that Nyman misconstrues Hegel and Lefebvre is apparently "pseudo-intellectual name dropping" But maybe Sutherland's own somewhat starchy analyses could benefit from some philosophical spice He could start with Hegel's smaller *Logic* "Only when we discern that the content — the particular — is not self-subsistent, but derivative from something else, are its finitude and untruth shown in their proper light", and, a shot aimed at the Sutherlands of the 1B10s "People who are too fastidious towards the finite never reach actuality, but linger in abstraction, and their light dies away"

Ben Watson *London*

Americans? We love 'em!

I wish to respond to the Peter Brotzmann interview (*The Wire* 1BB) Hello Peter, you old bear, by a process of elimination I guess you must be referring to (amongst others?) the AMM, in your characterisation of some English musicians' view of Americans as "Fuck the Americans", and of their music as "fumbling around playing this artificial shit' I don't recall any movement that regarded the Americans in that way, you might not however have completely understood our point, written about then and pointed to in your interview Briefly, we were inspired by what black American jazz musicians (Dolphy/Monk/Cecil Taylor) had accomplished, evolving and developing a new form of music for the 20th century, based on improvisation, we were inspired to emulate their creative process, but not to appropriate their instrumental language, and so inspired to develop our own language like the generations of black artists had done previously Later, other American artists also became equally important to us (Cage/Tudor/Wolff/Feldman/Brown) We regarded American music as a breath of fresh air As for "fumbling around", it's for others to decide I know what I think!

Keith Rowe *Vallet, France*

ATV repeat

I'm pleased to oblige Martin Leigh who commented in Letters (*The Wire* 1BB) that Alternative TV's *Vibing Up The Senile Man* "is one album which will never be resuced from the dustbin of history by a CD reissue", hoping to be proved wrong Cherry Red/Anagram issued it some time ago with bonus tracks from *What You See* and tracks from The Good Missionaries' *Fire From Heaven* I still recall the grief I got from the independent shop that sold it to me at the time, as it was considered self-indulgent drivel and definitely not punk When I got it home it sounded to me to be totally 'authentic' (like *The Image Has Cracked* before it) — a real representation of what the hype meant if you really put it into practice, and in 1978, it provided a suggestion of how all the more interesting elements of the then-maligned late 60s/early 70s rock might find fresh expression as they did shortly after as numerous 'post-punk' bands finally found an audience Take *Vibing* together with *Image* and hear Britpop, Moog intros, cut-ups, a Zappa cover, ambience, abstraction, unpunk-like attempts at personal honesty recorders, embarrassment, ramshackle innocence and what Steve Albini called "the birth of Grunge" The Clash it was not

Tony Clough *via e-mail*

The Gun Club lobby

In response to Matthew Ingram's letter (*The Wire* 1B9), I too was at the 1991 Gun Club gig in Glasgow (College of Building and Printing) However, as I recall it, Kid Congo was dressed in a string vest and cycling shorts and looked about as eldritch as DP Gumby

Gregor Peat *Glasgow*

Northern attitude

As a keen reader of your incredibly pretentious but thankfully informative magazine, I felt angered by Peter Shapiro's review of the Warp compilations (Soundcheck, *The Wire* 1BB) Not only did he fail to inform us of whether the featured tracks were generally 'any good', but insisted on reviewing Northern life I thought for a moment that I was reading *NME* — crude 'Grim Up North' style stereotypes, cheap digs (of course only a city like Sheffield could produce an embarrassing band like Def Leppard), and irrelevant, heard-it-all-before political statements (about Thatcher) Like most of your readers I have been alive for the last ten years therefore I would prefer it if you would write solely about the music I can add my own cultural context. Never mind, perhaps one day you will all get a chance to prove your worth as social historians In the meantime, I'll just get back to feeding my whippets

Alistair Stevenson *Halifax*

More than a pretty face

What do Mouse On Mars (*The Wire* 1BB) expect when they go into the studio with a 50 year old furniture designer who has never sung, written, produced, programmed or played keyboards before? Wolfgang Flur was only Kraftwerk's drummer He left because the group had no use for one That was ten years ago, and before he met Mouse On Mars he had recorded nothing on his own Surprisingly, when he met Mouse On Mars, he shone Witty, quirky and eccentric, the tunes on Yamo's subsequent *Time Pie* album are wonderful, with big washes of seasick analogue synths, and as a singer/speaker, Wolfgang turns out to be one

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of Kraftwerk's great untapped resources. This is called snatching victory from the jaws of defeat. Mouse On Mars should tap themselves on the back.
Anders Moe *Oslo, Norway*

Spence account

Was the negative review of Skip Spence's *Oar* in *The Wire* 187 some kind of sacred-cow slaughter? *[No, just a negative review. Ed] Oar* doesn't really need defenders — it will stand. And attitude-copping reviews won't displace its status. I just think it's kind of pathetic you deep listeners over there missed it. I'll try and fill you in.

When Frederick Jackson Turner declared the American frontier closed in 1898, he was only partly right. The image of the frontier held on like a cultural hangover, and found itself reapplied to various social and psychic boundary situations that became acute in the 1960s (not to mention space programmes). I see Spence as a frontiersman, way out there in the dark mental prairie, just him humming to himself as strange shadows flit about just out of sight. That's him singing on that album right into your ear. It's about the most intimate fucking record ever set down in the pre-Jandek era — just a flickering little tallow candle on the edge of the abyss. Think of it: a drug addled hippy, way out of place in Nashville, Tennessee, doing his clumsy best to emulate *Blonde On Blonde* as a letter to himself, with Epic records picking up the tab. His craziness is like American craziness: darker, more virulent than the continental kind. Our years of total socialisation are fewer than yours, and then we've got that 'frontier' thingy. So Syd Barrett was impolite to Dick Clark. Skip Spence took axe in hand on a New York City bus to go do some business with bandmates. 'Utter music', whatever that means, might suffice after all to describe his stuff. Sometimes "received wisdom" ain't such a bad thing.
Chris Simpson *Philadelphia, USA*

For the record: the review you refer to was objectively written by one of our US contributors. Also: Oar was lavishly lauded in our 100 Records That Set The World On Fire feature in The Wire *175 (September 98). Ed*

A nasty rash

Unlike most of your readers, who write in expressing the opposite, one of my secret pleasures with *The Wire* is in reading about music I know I may never hear. In case that makes me sound a little abstract, I should point out that I don't always leave it to Biba Kopf's or David Keenan's or Rob Young's brilliant transportations. I do try to check the music out from time to time. After all, my favourite magazine's about music, isn't it? Not trendspotting.

Simon Reynolds's article on Ectomorph (*The Wire* 187) was as irritating as a nasty rash, completely uncritical of Brendan Gillen's absurd postures and ancient ideas on female sexuality. One of my friends thoughtfully passed me a tape and I would be glad if you could inform the group that I found their music just as sexy as their photographs and as daring and modern as Les Rythmes Digitales, who I'm sure Reynolds is probably writing excited articles about in US publications.

Conversely I must thank you for introducing me to the enchanted and slightly baffling world of Maher Shalal Hash Baz. It was such a thrill to finally get to hear them on your *Domino On The Wire* CD (189). They just sound like no one else and I love them on the basis of the one song I know. The Pastels and Movietone tracks were exceptionally beautiful too. All in all I thought it was quite an amazing giveaway.
Sarah Downing *London*

Cat scratch fever

Somewhere between sleep and being awake last night, I conceived a solution to the problem of how I might write to *The Wire* and tell it how much I like it. Today, that solution not only fails to convey how I feel about *The Wire* but stinks to high heaven of twee-ishness or something out of Gogol's *Diary Of A Madman* — possibly both. The idea was this: that my kittens' (I really do have them — two — named Dives & Lazarus and Fire In The Kitten) should write to the staff about the role played by *The Wire* in this bunker we live in, in relation to both kinds of mammal found herewithin. They were going to wax enthusiastic about the ease with which stacks of *Wire* back issues can be scattered into various forms of slides and seesaws, the high rippability of the most interesting articles, the valuable tips they've garnered on 'scratching' spinning LPs (they prefer LPs to CDs, for the wider opportunities for creativity the former afford), the Tono-Bungay ads in the back (of course), the heftiness of the magazine (*The Wire* is perfect to climb onto as an island of safety when your owner is reading one in the bathtub), the free CDs (which save your owner money, which means more fish for you, also, with a little work, you can learn how to walk against the CD buttons so your favourite tracks keep starting over and over again), the jokes that make your owner laugh aloud so you have an excuse to lean your body against your owner's mouth for a while and purr, and many other features they consider worthy of being singled out for praise. It's 2pm now, however, and while I've just remembered this dark three-o'clock-of-the-soul brainstorm, I'm too wide awake and prosaic to act on it and even they seem less interested in sharing their delight with *The Wire* staff than in finding out what this interesting cucumber-seed cluster encrusted onto issue 175 could taste like.
Dives & Lazarus and Fire In The Kitten (c/o Sid Greenfield) *New Jersey, USA*

Poland's treat

I have been your avid reader for three years and a subscriber for almost two, but it's the first time I am writing. First of all, let me thank you for the excellent work you do. In a country currently going through a period of major companies grabbing large chunks of the market with their chart fodder (Poland), magazines like *The Wire* are the only source of information concerning all sorts of not only independent, but also fringe musics. I must say that for the past three years, ever since I started reading *The Wire*, my musical tastes have been expanding exponentially.

Regarding the contents of the last few issues I was really happy to see a mention of Jon Whitney's Coil Website in issue 187's Go To section (Multimedia). I think this is one of the best EVER musical sites, both graphics- and content-wise. Then, issue 188's Outer Limits review section features two releases by an Australian act Dworzec. A little trivium here — the name in Polish means 'a railway or bus station'. Makes you wonder where they got their name from.

Finally, I have been wondering whether some future issues might include: a feature on the dark end of the Ambient spectrum, including Cold Meat Industries from Sweden (or is that beyond the magazine's interest?), more mentions, perhaps even a separate feature, on Polish *Wire*-esque music — there are certainly a few labels and acts worth mentioning, such as Obuh Records or Warszawska Jesionka, to mention just one very arbitrary tip of an iceberg. Once again, thanks for all sonic adventures.
Pawel Frelik *Lublin, Poland*

Can of worms

I'm sure I'll see a review in *The Wire* of the Can Solo Projects at the Barbican this October *[Don't hold your breath, we reviewed the tour when it played in Cologne earlier this year: see* The Wire *183 — Ed]* and I'd like to add a thought about the event. The cynical might view this event as a triumph of marketing and brand extension over product and performance. Can the group need no introduction, but clearly the former members of the group do. The mediocre offerings were self-indulgent, pedestrian displays of ill conceived ideas and lost talent. The three projects on offer by Jaki Liebezeit, Irmin Schmidt and Michael Karoli will never generate interest beyond their past involvement with Can. The only former member of Can to successfully establish a career beyond Can is Holger Czukay. He was notably absent. Had one given the promotion for the event a more thorough reading one would have seen through the con of Can.
Vincent McCabe *London*

I would like to thank you for listing the Can Solo Projects concert. I went to the Barbican Centre as a result and had an amazing listening time. Any chance of a review or an interview with Jaki Liebezeit or Irmin Schmidt? Many thanks for a great magazine.
N Svarc *Lincoln*

Corrections

Issue 189 In Bites, we neglected to credit Nathan Mandell with taking the photograph of Kevin Drumm. In the Directory, we forgot to list the contact details for a couple of labels. They were: Ash International (RIP), 13 Osward Road, London SW17 7SS, e-mail *touch@touch.demon.co.uk*, distribution: Kudos/Pinnacle; These, Erstwhile: fax 001 201 332 0049, e-mail *ErstRecs@aol.com*, Web: *www.erstwhilerecords.com*

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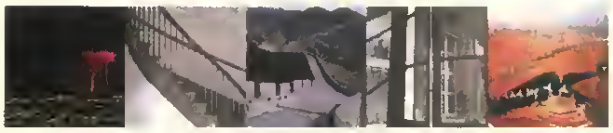

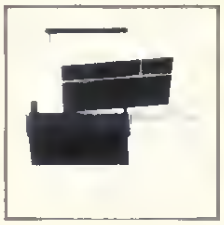

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Susumu Yokota

Susumu Yokota

Transient waves

In the summer of 1992, a Japanese economist-turned-artist-turned-DJ/musician called Susumu Yokota slipped quietly into the consciousness of the global Techno community. The understatedness of Yokota's arrival seemed appropriate, for here was a musician whose trademark sound was built around a slippage between genres. Not so much *in* the groove as sliding all around it, Yokota's music was characterised by a delicacy of touch that was evident in even the hardest tracks which graced his first European release, *Frankfurt-Tokyo Connection*, issued in 1993 by Sven Vath's Harthouse label.

Remix work — for Luke Slater and Max Brennan — followed, alongside a number of albums recorded for Japan's Sublime label, as well as two — *Sakura* and *Magic Thread* — released by his own Skintone Records. Most of them highlight Yokota's discreet take on Ambient driftworks, Acid House and post-Detroit Techno. More recently, the London-based Leaf label has issued *Image 1983-1998*, a comprehensive compilation which casts Yokota in a different light, tracing his elliptical progress through 15 years of music making. There is an unknown quality to certain tracks, such as the early 80s bedroom guitar experiments, or a piece like "Nisemono No Uta" ("Counterfeit Song"), which includes several bathroom choruses of Gloria Gaynor's high-street disco anthem, "I Am What I Am". The humour, while off-kilter, is disorientating.

"It is like a slice of film," suggests Yokota via his translator, Mimi. "There's sadness, seriousness, inside the story and it depends very much on the scene the listener brings to it."

Our conversation — if that's the right word for it — proceeds in a crab-like fashion. In advance of a scheduled London meeting, I e-mail questions to Tokyo, where they are collected and translated by Mimi. When we meet, Yokota, a genial six-footer, gestures me towards Mimi, who is clutching the sheaf of translated responses which they have worked on together. They are at pains to explain the 'meaning' of *Image*'s title. "It's difficult to translate," says Mimi, pointing to the Japanese characters on the CD sleeve as Yokota hovers in the background. "This one means 'mind', this one 'reflections', this one 'view'. It's got a deeper resonance in Japanese." A few hours after our meeting, they phone through to pass on the results of a further impromptu conference on the question of the title's 'correct' translation. "We've decided it's *Mental Image*," says Mimi. "That's better."

Beyond linguistics, the tracks on *Image* flick by like a series of Polaroids, isolating transient events in translucent, solarised interiors. Some of the music is suggestive of the kind of playful electro-dramas realised by Eno and Cluster 20 years ago, elsewhere there are echoes of John Fahey's elegiac guitar phantasias. "It's difficult to answer," writes/says Yokota referring to the allusive/elusive quality of this music. "It is abstract, rather like the idea of a mental image. The sounds are products of my own memory, including those I did not experience directly, like a deja vu. It's like one scene from the movies of my memory, although I could not point out exactly which movie."

"I had the idea to create various styles of music as a way of returning to my roots," he adds, the implication being that for a musician like Yokota, the notion of

PHOTO: VINCE DOLMAN

roots now equates to fleeting moments of identification with emergent sonic phenomena

Searching for an appropriate analogy for a music that drifts at will across the trans-continental data streams Yokota settles on kona, the Japanese word for powder On the *Image* sleeve, which also includes hazy representations of a number of his mixed-media artworks, he writes "I wished to be kona at the moment of death Sugar stevia, some chemical drugs are a gathering of super-particles Accumulate some white kona and blow on them They will scatter and never be replaced exactly in their original form Like the vagueness of memories"

"It is atmosphere that I'm interested in," he concludes "It's like powder Abstract Free One breath — *pffff* — and it's gone" **LOUISE GRAY** Image 1983-1998 *is out now on Leaf Thanks to Clive Bell and Kazuko Hohki for help with translations*

DJ Scud & Aphasic

Extreme noise pleasure

With rave's original anything-goes spirit totally lost in the current state of dancefloor orthodoxy, a DJ who is willing to mix things up a bit is a valuable commodity, even if it means clearing the dancefloor of all but the most extremist scenesters in a matter of seconds One such spinner is DJ Scud, the co-founder, with his fellow DJ/producer Aphasic, of the mighty harshstep/terrorcore/splatterbreak label Ambush It soon becomes obvious that Scud wears his floorclearing skills as a badge of pride "There was this scenario in Berlin at the Hate Parade party and I was one of two DJs that didn't play speedcore" he brags "The moment I came on I cleared the floor in three minutes, literally The DJ deck was raised above the crowd and it was just a sea of heads, three minutes into my set I could see the dancefloor People were going up to the promoter, 'Who booked this shit?'

"So, we are up against it," he asserts emphatically "There is an audience out there for our music but it is very small It's still normally tagged on to the gabba, speedcore, whatever thing, which is annoying"

Characterised by escape velocity drum shrapnel, violent distortion and dive-bombing synth lines it's easy to see why the music Ambush releases has been lumped in with the Techno chainsaw massacre of gabba and speedcore But with the label's commitment to both the breakbeat and the sheer exhilaration of noise, Ambush is actually forging a link with the early, exciting days of Jungle and Hardcore when they seemed to promise so much For example, Shizuo's "Trouble", from the new Ambush compilation *Mash The Place Up*, circumcises the horn riff of Cheryl Lynn's "Got To Be Real" and smothers it in a whirlwind of arcade game FX and punchy, unrhythmic beats, meanwhile, Scud's hyperkinetic title track offsets the slightly rigid, Panacea-style drum track with pink noise stabs, self-destructing modems, a ragga DJ and a secondary breakbeat that actually *breaks*

"It does come out of this rave ethos," says Scud explaining the music's combination of bluster and jouissance "When I first experienced rave, I'd find myself dancing to essentially ludicrous sounds that you never even knew existed And you'd do it in a very open-minded way Before it split off into all these sub-genres there was that element of celebration that people were wigging out to this insane noise That's what we're trying to inject back into the stuff we do That's the element that gets people dancing We don't want to lose that funk element It's not just immobile noise, it's something that you can move to"

Again, unlike the punishing, hyper-masculine aesthetic of gabba (best typified by Sperminator's notorious "No Women Allowed"), Ambush has its roots in the populism of both sound system culture and squat politics The label formed in late 1996 after Scud and Aphasic had met at a Dead By Dawn party in Brixton, South London "Dead By Dawn was a melting pot of lots of different possibilities," explains Aphasic "The focus was always the music, but there were a lot of other things going on as well Before each party there was a meeting and a discussion centred around different issues So it was always in this context that, OK, there's a party, but there were all these different things that spun off it The important thing, that we weren't necessarily able to articulate at the time, was that Dead By Dawn had this celebratory feel to it OK, it was quite extreme music and quite noisy but it was about celebration People always felt very safe there there were always a lot of women there It wasn't just blokes standing around There was this feeling of noise and harsh frequencies and extreme music being the catalyst for this well, a party in the real sense of the word"

"I recently played in Chicago at this Drop Bass Network party," Scud continues "The promoter e-mailed me to thank me and he had this nice little phrase saying that he looked on the dancefloor and he could see 'the pain and the smiles on the people's faces' I thought that's what it's about, turning people on to the joys of extreme frequencies"

'Frequencies are fun," assures Aphasic Give yourself up to the septic basslines, earsplitting feedback and scattershot drums that define the duo's tracks, and you understand what he means Ambush's 'symphonies of stress' are *intoxicating* Most of their tracks are assembled from banks of samples lifted from musique concrete, dancehall, dub and early Hardcore records and then stitched together with their own virulent din 'I'm doing more noise processing myself nowadays rather than just nicking other noise," Scud says "It's still all very lo-fi In industry terms I don't think we'd know how to make well-produced tracks I'm doing this sound engineering course at the moment and these guys are going 'Can you hear that hi-hat? It's distorted And I'm like 'Is it? Doesn't sound like it to me'" **PETER SHAPIRO** Mash The Place Up *is out now on Ambush*

PHOTO NICK STRANGELOVE

Werner Dafeldecker

Sonic crisis manager

"The 'improvisation versus academia' debate isn't alive any more, it's got a long beard, it's boring," proclaims Werner Dafeldecker fiercely. "People are now playing music which is lightyears ahead of this discussion! Advanced music is losing more and more its elite character. This could be because people now have the technology to work at home at their music: they don't have to be musicians or composers in the conventional sense of the terms. I like this development a lot."

As a member of Polwechsel, Vienna's purveyors of shockingly intense electrotexturism, Dafeldecker has situated himself at a nodal point in modern music. The Swiss Hat Hut label was so impressed, it has reissued Polwechsel's first CD (originally released on Georg Graewe's Cologne based Random Acoustics label) in tandem with their latest, *Polwechsel 2*. Both CDs carry a photograph of a Hartmann-Kempf 'Polwechsel' — a polarity changer for measuring electric current. The image is telling. Polwechsel bring the buzzes and hums of electro-magnet pickups into audibility, forcing sonic crises of reversal and discharge. Though they've recently exchanged trombonist Radu Malfatti for London saxophonist John Butcher, Polwechsel maintain an ear-pricking identity and clarity of purpose.

Dafeldecker and fellow bassist Uli Fussenegger set up the Durian label in 1995 to release their own music, but now the catalogue includes Beat Furrer conducting his own compositions with Klangforum Wien, free improvisation with percussionist Roger Turner, and solo electrotexturism excursions for Burkhard Stangl's guitar and Michael Moser's cello. Dafeldecker doesn't think this broad range should raise eyebrows.

Born in 1964, Dafeldecker initially picked up the electric bass aged 13 to play tunes by Booker T And The MGs. Initially an 'autodidakt', he studied double bass at the Vienna Conservatory, but also played in Ton-Art, producing a chilly variant of Third Stream (*Mal Vu Mal Dit*, Hat Hut, 1991). By 1995 he was exploring sonority in a duo with Fussenegger, mining the same rich seam of interstitial timbres that enabled composer Giacinto Scelsi and cellist Frances-Marie Uitti to produce real-time acoustic music suggestive of sci-fi electronica. In 1997 Durian released *Diphtongs*, a collaboration with Christian Muhlbacher. It was an exacting recombination of solo free improvisations recorded by ten different instrumentalists, using computer technology to achieve the novel textures and rhythmic decisiveness that are Dafeldecker's hallmarks.

"For *Diphtongs* we had no scores, which made the work seem easier at first. But," he adds ruefully, "after a while it turned out we had to rebuild almost every millimetre of the material to get interesting results. It was my first work on the computer, and at that point I had no idea of how to use it for composition."

Dafeldecker has none of the hostility towards composition shown by the first wave of British free improvisors, who emerged in the 60s, when denunciations of composers as symbols of authority were ubiquitous.

"I notated the pieces 'Nord', 'Ost' and 'Sudwest' on *Polwechsel 1* by showing the musicians how to produce certain sounds, and how to use their surroundings as a source for improvising," he explains. "It wasn't so much focused on how the result should sound. I find this is a way not to get lost with the material. I had to experiment with a lot of the instruments used, finding out how they react to particular preparations."

Polwechsel 2 is particularly remarkable for the decisive way in which the players cut off their sounds. In music like this, an aural version of the stark abstractions of the 1920s avant garde, knowing when to stop seems as important as what you're actually playing: the drift of free improvisation into conversational, dialogic modes is thwarted. I asked Dafeldecker how much this was consciously modelled on Luigi Nono and Helmut Lachenmann, whose sonic erasures are almost a political criticism of what Teddy Adorno called 'affirmative culture'.

"No," he replies emphatically. "I like creating processes or having situations which let the music disappear, but I'm not obsessed with that. When we play in Polwechsel, this disappearance thing is somehow 'in the air'. Really, it's about providing the opportunity to concentrate on the sonic material. "Hyogo" on *Polwechsel 2* is designed around cut-offs but in order to convert an architectural plan into music. The side effect — to avoid our own cliches — is a good thing, but not the main idea."

In 1998, Dafeldecker played a brief tour with Christof Kurzmann on laptop, clarinet and theremin and Christian Fennesz on laptop. In addition, Jim O'Rourke, Martin Siewert and Kevin Drumm guested on laptop and guitars. The results were packaged in eye-stinging orange by the Charhizma label. The music is characterised by restricted harmonies and state-of-the-anti-art crackles and pops. What's missing is the pared down clarity and sense of consequence of Dafeldecker's other music.

"Generally I try to avoid sounds which are 'too pretty' whatever that means, or appear in contexts which are open to more than one direction," Dafeldecker elaborates. "In some parts [the Charhizma CD] deals with those elements, but really it's improvised music and I plan to continue with it.

"At the moment I'm more interested in using electronic procedures and programs which alter sound sources," he concludes, "and then combining the results with live played material, and then treating that. I think the future hides countless possibilities of how acoustic and electronic instruments can be combined."

BEN WATSON Polwechsel 1 *and 2 are out now on Hat Hut. Durian Website*: www.durian.co.at

Werner Dafeldecker

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Jessica Bailiff

Still life with guitar

"Ideally, I want to find a perfect balance between the two worlds of songs and sonics," explains Ohio denizen Jessica Bailiff. "That's what I really enjoy about bands like Flying Saucer Attack and earlier Sonic Youth — there could be this crazy, screaming guitar-based noise going on in one channel, then in the other you have a very soulful voice singing some beautiful lyrics. That blows me away." In the space of two immaculately conceived long players on the Kranky label, Bailiff has succeeded in creating a singular soundworld where frail, intensely personal wordage combines with hurricane sound. Geographically, she couldn't be better placed to reconcile the two poles. Born in Toledo, Ohio, somewhere between the twin rock city stacks of Detroit and Cleveland, she regularly travels up to Duluth, Minnesota, on the shores of Lake Superior, to record at the studio of Low's Alan Sparhawk.

The still waters of Bob Dylan's hometown have their correspondence in the slow-levitating static sounds that characterise her catalogue. "I really like Duluth," Bailiff enthuses. "Though I've only been there in the wintertime. It's one of those places that's supposed to have these wretched winters where it's very cold and with tons of snow, but all the times I've been there we've had these fluke warm spells right in the dead of season. Very strange. But it is a beautiful place, with some breathtaking views."

Bailiff's hook-up with spectral basement rockers Low took place in the spring of 94, while Low were on tour with Dean Wareham's Luna. Up to then Bailiff had played in a group called Cicada during her last year in college, and then she went out and recorded as The Jane, before making her first Kranky disc, *Even In Silence*, under her own name. The meeting of minds with Low soon steadied her course. "A lot of what I am now, musically, stems from that relationship," she admits. "Alan has been very inspiring and has helped me to see things differently. I guess one common aesthetic would be that there are no bad sounds, only different ones. For example, one might dismiss a snare drum because its sound is too deep and the snare's too loose, but put that drum in the right song..."

Bailiff's records are syrup-thick with dizzying FX collisions. Tracks bob and float on tides of ever-receding tonal howl, while the sweet precision of her vocals hangs deep and lantern-like. Coming out of the Kranky stable, Bailiff has inevitably been lumped-in with the 'new' space rock schtick — endless, treated instrumental jamming — but she seems unfazed by adverse labelling. "I don't really mind it so much," she shrugs. "It just makes it easier for someone to describe the music. I don't think I ever used the term space rock to describe anything myself... but if I had to, it would be something you'd listen to when exploring inner space. I do feel, however, that there are way too many people making music out there that they call space rock which is completely uninspired."

The sleepy charms and folk-twang of her voice are reminiscent of some of the women on the outer fringes of the alt.country scene, like Edith Frost or Sue Garner. Bailiff agrees that some kind of traditional folk ethic underpins her work, but she's not exactly sure where it comes from. "I guess it's true," she sighs. "I have to say I've never considered myself to be a big fan of folk music. I was brought up listening to more traditional pop music, so I have a great appreciation for a well done song. My memories about music begin when my Mom gave my Dad and I a Beatles album for Christmas when I was five, though she tells me I used to sing along to the radio before then. I remember wanting to be Paul McCartney for some reason... I really love Nick Drake, and of course I love Low's music. I think my appreciation for these things comes through in what I do." Tracks like "Toska", on the new *Hour Of The Trace* album, reflect her downhome musical tastes in the way that they cross simple, loose guitar rattling with ethereal vocals to paint widescreen American vistas.

"Emotional content is the most important thing for me," she says. "I am communicating something specific in every song I do, though it can only be fully understood often times by myself and the person I've written it about." Indeed, she's wary of any music that's driven solely by the urge to innovate. "I still think there's plenty to be explored when it comes to guitars but I think a lot of times emotion and soul are lost for the sake of trying to create new sounds. I don't care what someone uses to get their point across successfully." **DAVID KEENAN** Hour Of The Trace *is out now on Kranky*

bitstream

Pole-axed. London electronica label **Fat Cat** recently became the unwitting victims of an anonymous electro-hoax. Having commissioned two tracks from Stefan 'Pole' Betke for inclusion on one side of a forthcoming single in the label's Split Series, a package duly arrived at Fat Cat HQ containing a letter signed by Betke and a DAT tape with two tracks of minimal electro-dub bearing the almost-Pole-like titles, "Bestie Hijack" and "Melkendie Kuh". Eager to issue the latest music from one of the most bankable names on the global electronic network, the label pressed up 200 advance copies of the single and mailed them out to its distributor, SRD, and sundry radio pluggers. Except it turns out that the tracks are not the work of Stefan Betke at all — in fact, he hadn't even sent the label a tape. Smelling a scam, and indulging in some hasty damage limitation, Fat Cat recalled most of the promos, but there are still 30 or 40 copies of the offending vinyl slab out there — now worth a small fortune to those who care about such things. Meanwhile, the expense of pressing the disc meant the label's employees lost a month's pay. Whodunnit? Initial suspicion fell on those electro-malcontents and seasoned hoaxers, V/Vm, especially as the titles of the offending tracks 'translated' as "Animal Hijack" and "Milking The Cow". But the Mancunians have denied all knowledge of the scam, and in fact claim they too have been the victims of a hoax via the mysterious appearance of an unofficial V/Vm 7". The Great Glitch Caper rolls on. +++ **Bjork**, **Richie 'Plastikman' Hawtin** and **La Monte Young** are among a group of musicians, artists and film makers who have been commissioned by the French Department of Culture to compose new works for *La Beaute*, a multimedia project which forms part of France's Millennium 2000 celebrations. The project will unfold in various venues in Avignon between 15 April–15 September next year, with additional contributions coming from the likes of Jeff Koons, Jean-Luc Godard and Anish Kapoor. Meanwhile, back in the UK, the music for London's Millennium Dome will be provided by... Peter Gabriel. +++ **The Pauline Oliveros Foundation** is gearing up to release a series of the minimalist composer/improvisor's early analogue electronic works. Covering the period 1960–64, when Oliveros was working alongside the likes of Morton Subotnik and Ramon Sender at the legendary San Francisco Tape Music Center, the releases will be drawn from a tape archive containing more than 20 hours of material, and will be issued by Oliveros's own Deep Listening label. The first volume in the series will be available early in the New Year. +++ Following in the wake of Elvis Costello, Laurie Anderson, John Peel and Nick Cave, the one and only **Scott Walker** is lined up to curate next summer's Meltdown festival on London's South Bank. While we are already looking forward to renewing our acquaintance with the Jacques Brel songbook, the big question is: will the notoriously shy and reclusive singer/composer steady his nerves long enough to put in appearance himself? In the mean time, Walker's soundtrack for Leos Carax's *Pola X* has just been released in France by the Barclay label. +++ And finally, the sad news of the death of **Lester Bowie**, who succumbed to liver cancer in November. As a member of The Art Ensemble Of Chicago, Bowie's contribution to Great Black Music: Ancient To The Future is beyond doubt, and the world will be a far less vibrant place without his presence.

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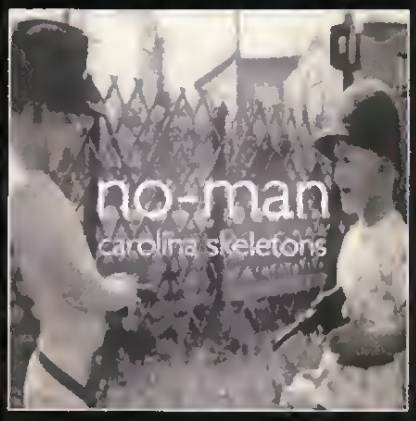

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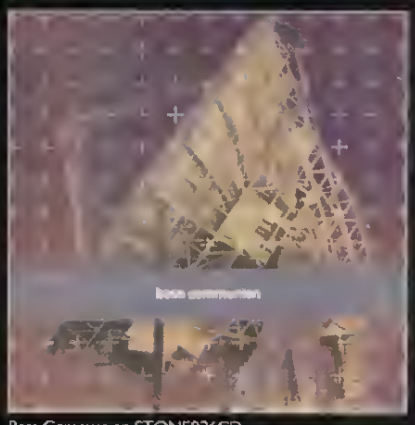

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global ear

A survey of sounds from around the planet. This month . . .

Amsterdam

When ¡TchKung!, a radical environmentalist tribal-punk percussion troupe from Seattle, set off on a summer tour of Europe, they began, appropriately enough, in Amsterdam. On paper, the famously liberal city would seem to offer a more welcoming atmosphere for the group than their hometown, where they now have trouble finding places to play. In fact, Seattle's fire wardens have designated them a public menace. But then, a typical ¡TchKung! performance does involve fire-eating, onstage arc-welding and the demolition of any number of household appliances. What's more, their lyric-slogans encourage audiences (up to 4000 on a good night) to defend Mother Earth by vandalising the property of major corporations and the United States government. Their arguments evidently carry weight: after one show in Eugene, Oregon, fans trashed the local Niketown. In short, ¡TchKung! offer the kind of serious fun that should appeal directly to a politically sympathetic audience weaned in Amsterdam's legendary anarchist squat scene.

However, during the group's first Dutch show, hosted by the Onze Lieve Vrouw Gasthuis squat, which occupies an abandoned wing of a functioning hospital, the hardline polemic failed to connect. The crowd lapped it up when the group members marched through their midst, wearing cloaks, carrying torches and tootling a little Arabian flute, and when the drummers' locked into some sophisticated Rajastani- and North African-derived rhythms. But when ¡TchKung!'s lead singer, the strapping Rick Tahoma Wilson, bellowed *"Smash things up!"* and dedicated a song to the activists who attack US Forest Service planes in defense of timber wolves, he was met with a sea of blank stares. Sure, the Dutch squat movement had declined since its political heyday in the 1980s, but had it lost its edge entirely? Or could it be that ¡TchKung!'s radical environmentalist message had no purchase in a country which owed its very existence to massive engineering projects?

As it turns out, there is a radical environmental movement in Holland. "But there's a difference between the American and Dutch radical environmental movements," asserts the Amsterdam squat-movement leader Grrrt, a prominent member of the Entrepotdok squat, where ¡TchKung! were set to play several days later. "Dutch environmentalism is more influenced by the British anti-roadbuilding movement, and less by the Earth First! style," he explains, referring to the US environmentalists notorious for their advocacy of direct action.

Jaap Krater is one of the leaders of Groen Front!, which has opposed various construction projects in Holland over several years. Groen Front!'s first major action was in defense of Ruigord, an old town first squatted in the late 60s and later designated to make way for an expansion of the Port of Amsterdam. "There was an empty sandy area in Ruigord which had a really unique ecology," says Jaap. But it wasn't exactly unspoiled nature — the sand had been dumped there in the early 70s by companies disposing of low level toxic waste. Jaap lives in a squatted terrace house in Utrecht, which, in a concept utterly foreign to the Americans, complies scrupulously with official squatting regulations. "The dwelling has to have been empty for at least one year," he explains. "Then you have to notify the district attorney that you've occupied it. The DA has examined our case, and he isn't going to prosecute."

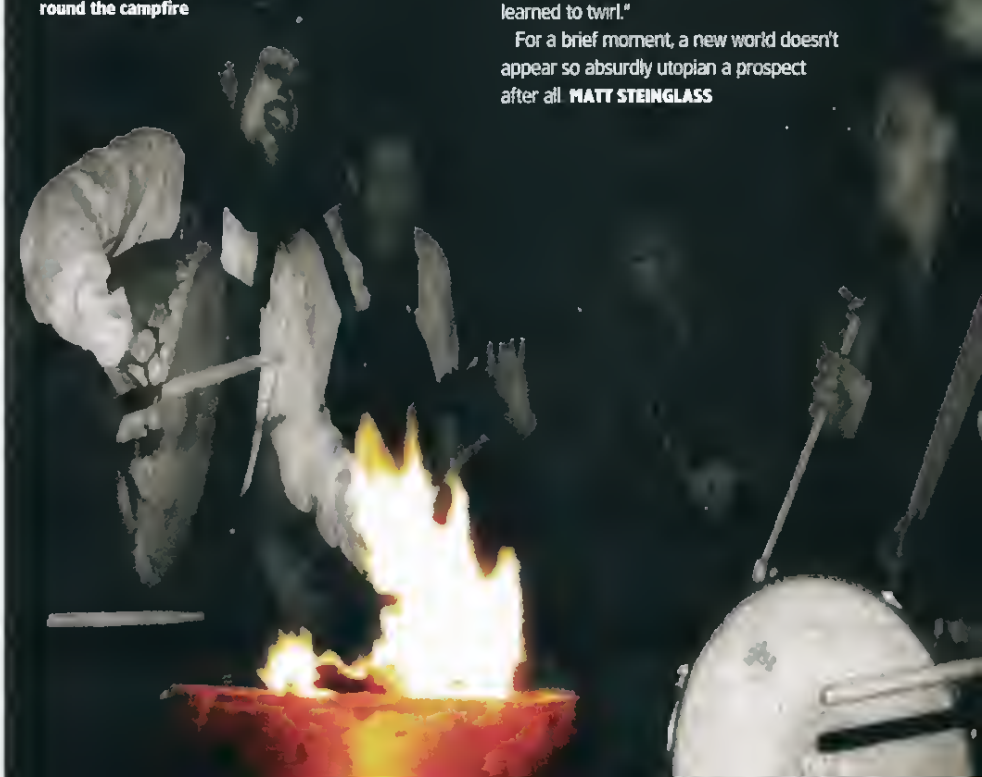
These contrasting attitudes towards law enforcement are not lost upon ¡TchKung!, whose backs-to-the-wall stance is summed up in the song "Smash Things Up!": *"Stick to your story, never confess, never give in a friend!"* "People here don't want to fight the cops," complains Wilson. "They don't want to ruin a good thing." However, percussionist Greyg Filastine reveals a certain admiration for European environmental consciousness. "They're ahead of the US on green lifestyle issues," he says. "Using real plates and silverware instead of plastic disposable ones. The mopeds and small cars, heavy taxation of fuel, subsidisation of public transit." Wilson agrees, adding: "Vegetarianism in England. And separate shower and shitter rooms so if someone's taking a shower you can go and take a piss." Filastine marvels: "Intelligent!"

Nevertheless, certain aspects of the ¡TchKung! philosophy are unique to utopian America, such as their agenda for an environmentally responsible future. "All of the central plains States should be evacuated. We should bring back the buffalo and the wolves," says Wilson, who goes on to deplore the environmental collapse of Europe: "They completely destroyed this entire continent. Sherwood Forest is smaller than a Walmart parking lot. They're incredibly overpopulated, stuffed with sewage and pollution." "Europe is for humans," adds Filastine, and he doesn't mean it as a compliment.

A few days later I attend ¡TchKung!'s final show at the Entrepotdok squat with some Dutch friends. The atmosphere is elegiac: the Onze Lieve Vrouw Gasthuis squat has already been evicted, and just across the canal, another autonomous community is being cleared out. The Entrepotdok squat itself is to be converted into luxury condos early next year. When we walk in, my friends proclaim: "You've taken us back to the 80s!" Communist and punk rock posters adorn the walls, mohawks loom through the cigarette smoke over islands of low, ratty furniture, and melting candles cover everything in sight.

This time the show is fantastic. The rapt audience is evidently sympathetic to ¡TchKung!'s naively apocalyptic calls to *"Let a new world be born"*. A television set is hurled to the floor and demolished with hammers. A blonde girl emerges from out of the darkness, whirling flaming iron balls on twin chains like some kind of Hindu avatar. "What was that about?" I ask Filastine after the show. "That was BQ," he explains. "She bought a mountain bike in Q'in Jiang province and rode it over the Himalayas to Nepal. That's where she learned to twirl."

For a brief moment, a new world doesn't appear so absurdly utopian a prospect after all. **MATT STEINGLASS**



Big flames: ¡TchKung! squat round the campfire

BRIGGAN KRAUSS DESCENDING TO END

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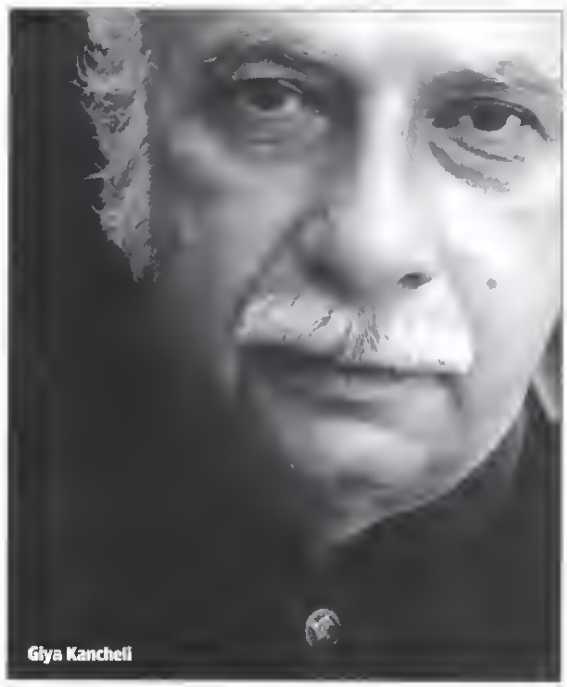
raging silence

Decoding the spaces between the notes reveals the meaning of the music of Georgian composer **Giya Kancheli**, whose silences spoke volumes during the Soviet era. Words: Ian MacDonald

During the late 80s, glasnost revealed a secret tradition of hidden meaning in Soviet music. Concepts like 'shadow writing', 'writing between the lines', 'giving voice' and so on became known outside the USSR. In the 1990 BBC2 series *Think Today, Speak Tomorrow*, a member of the Moscow scene, Alexander Ivashkin, put it this way: "For many years we weren't allowed to speak or show what we thought. Consequently a strange thing happened. When something came out into the open, part of it stayed hidden — like an iceberg with only a small part above the water. So symbolism became very characteristic of Russian music — symbolism of the simplest kind. An interval, sound or rhythm became a symbol which the listener could identify. Music became the bridge to a thought or philosophical concept rather than an end in itself. It was never a mere sound construction."

In effect, all nonconformist Soviet music was a protest against the stifling of spiritual and intellectual freedom under the Soviet system — a repression so petty and so total as to be unimaginable to Westerners. Since, until around 1986, such protest could lead to anything from loss of income to being locked up on a mental ward, it had to be discreet — hence the need for symbols. Merely spotting a symbol, however, doesn't get us very far. To grasp the meaning of a symbol and a composer's intention in using it requires understanding of the feelings, thoughts or experiences for which the symbol stands.


Giya Kancheli

Take the contemporary Georgian composer Giya Kancheli. Reviewers of his first Western CD release in 1990, which included his *Third* and *Sixth* symphonies (Olympia OCD401), made no attempt at interpretation, sticking to technical descriptions leavened with the usual allusions to the mysterious Russian steppes. So concerned were they to avoid 'extra-musical' speculation that they failed to report that the *Third Symphony*'s first ten minutes consist of a ploddingly sinister — and musically barbarically stupid — military march. To address this would have involved asking some awkward questions, such as 'Who is marching?' And 'Is the stupidity Kancheli's, or is he pointing at something else?' In fact, the context of Kancheli's music until around 1990 was the Soviet enslavement of the independent nation of Georgia. In the most immediate sense, the march in the *Third Symphony* symbolises the forces then constraining Georgia's freedom. It also means a great deal more than this — but it signifies this *to begin with*.

Kancheli's music dwells on a complex of interrelated themes — grief, fear, solitude, vigil, memory, nostalgia, innocence, intolerance, protest, longing — each new piece approaching this nexus from a different angle, as if determined to perfect a coded way of talking about something either unmentionable or otherwise difficult to express. The composer has said that "the mysterious silence that precedes the emergence of a tone" fascinates him most. Yet to suggest that the silence in his *Sixth Symphony* is as much politico-cultural as transcendentally 'mysterious' in no way depletes the richness of his music's meaning. All that's important is not to mistake such works for neutral landscapes — or rather to picture the *right sort* of landscape: a wasteland peopled with threadbare figures menaced by impersonal forces (much as in Tarkovsky's *Stalker*).

The local Russo-Georgian symbolism inherent in Kancheli's work is, at the same time, globally universal. The essence of his violent *Fifth Symphony*, for example, can be grasped by anyone who has seen Saddam Hussein's Victory Monument in Baghdad. This is protest music — the protest of the soul against soullessness, of the downtrodden against brute power. Forged, like Shostakovich's work, in the crucible of Stalinism, it addresses the whole planet, pleading for the sympathy of those lucky enough to be free and well fed. Even here, though, we must beware of taking mundane specifics as defining Kancheli's scope. In the widest and deepest perspective, his 'silence' is, as he says, mysterious: the eternal spiritual dimension beyond this transient world. It's in his focus on the transcendental that Kancheli departs most radically from the generation of Shostakovich, and finds most in common with his post-Soviet contemporaries.

Born in Tiflis on 10 August 1935, Kancheli worked almost exclusively in Georgia until moving to Berlin in 1992. His music first stirred interest in the West when his *Fourth Symphony* — which was awarded a USSR State Prize — was played there by The Philadelphia Orchestra in 1978. The New York publisher Schirmer commissioned his *Fifth Symphony* and the DDR's Leipzig Gewandhaus his *Sixth*, but the difficulties of travelling abroad under the Soviet system prevented him capitalising on such recognition. Devoting the early 80s to his opera, *Music For The Living*, he regained foreign attention when his cantata *Bright Sorrow* was performed at the Third International Festival of Contemporary Music in Leningrad in 1988. In 1990, *Bright Sorrow*, and his *Third*, *Fourth*, *Fifth* and *Sixth* symphonies, were issued on CD, revealing moving and imaginative music in communicative tonal style.

"Music," wrote Ilya Ehrenburg vis-a-vis Shostakovich, 'has one great advantage: without saying anything it can express everything." Kancheli has never denied an early influence from Shostakovich and it isn't hard to deduce the aspects which must have impressed him: the funerary largo from the older composer's *Sixth Symphony* (1939), the desolate passacaglia of the *Eighth Symphony* (1943), the megalomaniac noise blasts of the *Fourth* (1935-36) and the *Eighth*, the pathetic 'broken' endings of the *Second Piano Trio* (1944) and *Third Quartet* (1946). Yet if, like Shostakovich's music, Kancheli's symphonies at one level explore the experiences of defencelessness and self-denial under conditions of state terror, they do so in a very different musical language.

While some claim to hear echoes of Bartok in Kancheli, there are only two clear 'classical' influences in his work: allusions to the baroque (for instance, the chaste harpsichord in the *Fifth Symphony*) and, more pervasively, to early Stravinsky (the *Petrushka* reference in the allegro of the *Second Symphony* and two near-direct quotations from *The Rite Of Spring* in the *Third Symphony*). The most ubiquitous of Kancheli's classical 'influences' is the slow, seesawing three-note melody of the E flat processional at the end of Stravinsky's *Symphony Of Psalms* (a favourite of Shostakovich's). Transposed to C major, this appears in the second movement of the *First Symphony*, and completely dominates the *Second Symphony* in D flat. In fact Stravinsky's processional, with its measured minim tread, pedal tonality and pale flute voicing may be the model for Kancheli's entire mature style. (The final minutes of the *Third Symphony* certainly bear this out.)

If Stravinsky is the most obvious of Kancheli's 'classical' influences, his work is as fundamentally shaped by non-classical idioms, including Georgian folk, the West Coast cool jazz of the 50s, and postwar European film music (such as Michel Legrand's score for Losey's *The Go-Between* and Nino Rota's soundtracks for Fellini).

From Georgian folk music, Kancheli derives some of his most characteristic traits: modal melodies, bass drones, dynamic extremes, antiphonal groupings, and passages in which polyphonic lines rise to sonorous convergence on unisons. Folk instrumentation likewise shows in lute-like pizzicati, bagpipe effects, and the use of flute and harp. Much of Kancheli's cyclical stillness and slowness comes from the Georgian folk tradition, which is especially intense in its obdurate sense of deep-rootedness. Here the Caucasian Mountains enter Kancheli's music as a psychological foundation and framing horizon.

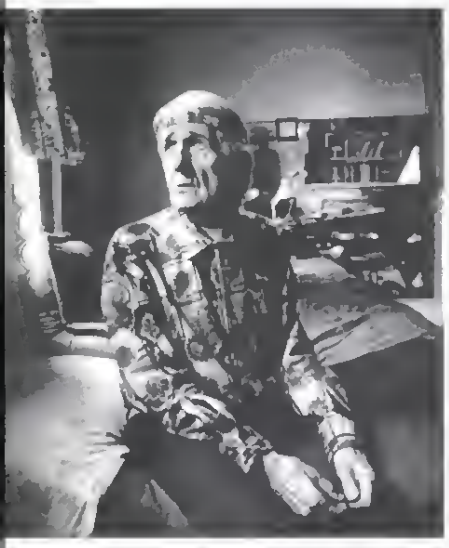
PHOTO EGINHARD TEICHMANN

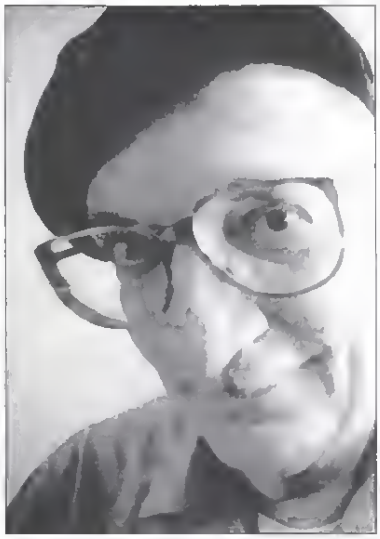
Expressive timbre is likewise a focus of Georgian music, and it's this aspect of his American sources that draws Kancheli as an orchestrator. From his *Second Symphony* onwards, he adds an extra flute to the usual three: the alto — an instrument favoured by Gil Evans, whose spare, pastel textures Kancheli admires. Assuming a prominent role in the *Fifth Symphony* and dialoguing with one of the solo violas in the *Sixth*, the alto lends a melancholy air to his flute quartet, which often plays like an independent choir within his orchestra. (There are no brass solos in Kancheli's music.) The alto flute and the viola, using similar tessituras, are often treated as close relations in the composer's work, presumably for their tonal resemblance to traditional Georgian folk instruments.

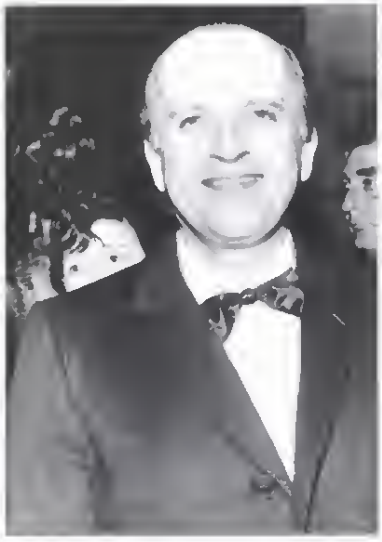
Another American influence is George Crumb, particularly his *A Haunted Landscape* on New World. In parts of Kancheli's *Third Symphony*, his wind players are asked to breathe through their instruments without producing a specific pitch, while in the *Sixth* the piano's strings are plucked and, in a loud passage towards the end of the work, electronically amplified. And *Music For The Living* (1982–84) introduced bass guitar, which has been a staple of Kancheli's orchestra ever since.

Just as Kancheli's explorations in sound depend on the ideas or emotions he wishes to convey, so his harmonic and dynamic designs reflect his paradoxical vision of intense feeling behind a frozen and fearful façade. Thus, tempos are mostly so slow as to give the impression of motionlessness, an effect sustained, even when short note values are in play, by the use of small and very simple circular progressions, tense pedal points and agonised suspensions. This brooding process — in which natural modulations are frustrated, thrust back on themselves, or cramped within the narrow confines of adjacent keys and the interval of the second — has been described as "dynamic stasis", as in the "slow motion of musical material with sudden dynamic explosions", as Luigi Nono put it.

Related to the cyclical folk idioms integral to it, Kancheli's method also suggests parallels with the film editing techniques familiar to him from his work in the cinema. In







place of orthodox modulation, the composer *cuts* abruptly between keys or slowly *dissolves* one chord into another by accumulating their pitches into blurred clusters. Since the tonic in most Kancheli scores is a disputed issue (often brusquely dictated by the interrupting orchestra), these arpeggio-clusters — which have their precedents in Hollywood melodrama soundtracks — also amount to significant polytonal ambiguities in themselves. With its politically sensitive connotations of change, tonality in Kancheli's music exists at an extreme margin in which it is able to manifest only as hesitant suggestion or wistful hope. In no other composer's works do the solo instruments speak so quietly or venture even the most modest of pitch excursions so diffidently.

At the level of general design, Kancheli works with extreme contrasts between moments of hesitant delicacy and cataclysmic avalanches of sound. Piano, harpsichord, spinet, harp, flute, viola and voice converse gingerly beneath the overvaulting precipice of the full orchestra, aware that at any moment it might descend on them. Between these extremes, time hangs still for long minutes while, at the grave pace of a Tarkovsky film, the music *mixes* cinematically from key to key, as if gradually shifting viewpoint. Kancheli's cellular orchestration is intrinsic to these gradual transitions, tone colour superseding tonality in what amounts to a cinematographic conception of orchestral timbre as light. In these moments, his chords hang in space, lit by the tonal qualities of the participating instruments in a manner suggesting the static painterly compositions of the Soviet director Vsevolod Pudovkin. Kancheli's cinematographic sense of orchestral colour as light — best exemplified in his warmest work, the *Fourth Symphony* — further brings to mind Andrei Tarkovsky and his lighting cameraman Vadim Yusov (although the composer himself has spoken rather of film *noir* and such Hollywood products as *The Maltese Falcon* and *Casablanca*).

Typically, in most of Kancheli's later symphonies, a small, fragile sound is symbolically confronted by the full orchestra. In his masterpiece, the *Sixth Symphony*, this role is taken by a pair of solo violas, which the composer asks to be concealed, behind screens, on either side of the rear of the orchestra. One viola plays melody, the other an accompanying drone — an imitation of an ancient Georgian two-stringed instrument called the chianuri. This disembodied sound, seemingly sourceless, becomes an eerie symbol of the suppressed Georgian national spirit. At the same time, it signifies something deeper: the tenuous presence of a higher dimension — the realm of the soul, of mysterious tradition and ancestral voices.

The *Sixth Symphony* is the locus classicus of Kancheli's style. Like most of his symphonies, it is in one movement comprised of four distinct sections. Beginning on a G pedal, the work announces its sparse complement of motifs, virtually all of which derive from a gradual tentative expansion away from the major third, as if nervously testing how far it's free to go. An imperious downward rush by the full orchestra onto G soon puts a stop to this, and the rest of the work grows out of the resulting chord of E minor (with a characteristic tragically yearning movement to the major dominant seventh and back). The stages of this prelude are formally delineated by a dry, time-marking B major scale on the harp, the eternal sadness of the two violas meanwhile persisting in the distance.

Thereafter, the symphony segues to its 'second movement': a slow Tarkovskian ascent to a dolorous D minor climax, relapsing on a unison G, the work's halfway point. This passage conveys a near-unbearable burden of repressed grief and outrage. (Those who know Tarkovsky's *Nostalgia* may be reminded of the agonising scene of the crossing of the fountain pool.) Two further D minor crescendos, funereally paced by a tolling bell, raise this anguish to an almost intolerable pitch — whereupon a memory of the work's tentative first steps ignites a hammering totalitarian scherzo of crushing power. Out of the debris emerges a quietly exhausted recapitulatory epilogue. After half an hour, the symphony has succeeded only in moving the elements of its opening section up a semitone, producing the effect of an unanswered question.

Although this music has a very definite point of view, it is not possible to say, in so many words, what the *Sixth Symphony* 'means'. Kancheli contemplates not merely the evils of the Soviet world but those of the human condition at large. Although it is routine to state that his music is 'spiritual', no one has so far dealt with the nature of this spirituality or its relationship to the forces which play such a darkly antagonistic role in Kancheli's work. For example, in *Bright Sorrow* — and, later, in both *Morning*

Prayers and *Night Prayers* (from *Life Without Christmas*) — he uses boys' voices 'to remind us of the voices of angels we have never heard" Like Benjamin Britten (most schematically in the *War Requiem*), Kancheli sees the material world as a realm of lost innocence convulsed by a Manichaean struggle in which "a force of invincible beauty towers above, and conquers, the forces of ignorance, bigotry, violence and evil" This force is spiritual, and Kancheli's ultimate references — like those of Arvo Part, Sofia Gubaidulina, and Henryk Gorecki — are transcendental (although not, in his case, conventionally religious) Kancheli sees the violent, materialistic modern world as exiled from a deeper continuity — "a high dream of the past, present and future" which he calls 'romanticism" and which amounts to the inner spiritual life from which flow love and charity To him, our machine-driven theory-ridden culture is a perilously deluded nightmare a life without Christmas Indeed, in the composer's blackest pages (*Night Prayers*), the world itself becomes positively demonic — an irredeemably benighted place ruled by dark forces All of Kancheli's music springs from this dualistic vision of light over darkness

Kancheli's refusal to adopt a Socialist Realist folk-national style turned his early career in Georgia into something of an uphill struggle He received a state stipend for his studies at the Tblisi Conservatory and, in 1962, won a prize at the All-Union Young Composers Competition Yet his supposedly 'cosmopolitan' interests (in particular his fondness for jazz) made enemies, and shortly after the competition, his *Concerto For Orchestra* was savagely censured in a leading music magazine That he didn t produce his first official opus, the *First Symphony* (1967), until he was 32 may not have been entirely due to his scrupulously slow compositional method

Though it's the only one of his symphonies to be divided into two movements, the *First* is nevertheless played continuously like the others Its least characteristic section is its opening allegro Its second movement, however displays the familiar Kancheli style already formed in most of its elements chordal thinking slow minim melodies, abrupt modulations and arpeggio-clusters, voice-like flute chorales and unharmonised high register violins As such, the *First* makes an effective prelude to the cycle without being very striking or inventive in itself

The title of the *Second Symphony* (1970), *Songs*, refers to the impact made on its composer by *Church Songs* the composer-folklorist Kachi Rosebaschvili's 1968 edition of traditional Georgian polyphonic pieces Not that Kancheli quotes these pieces directly "What fascinates me in the polyphonic songs of Georgia,' he admits, "is that secret spirit inherent in them, which I am not in a position to grasp " The symphony is built on song-like fragments of Kancheli s own devising, contrasted with unusually colourful orchestration Aside from this, the *Second* is a further logical step in his stylistic development While not as concentrated or convincing as his later symphonies, it is very lively and will certainly interest those familiar with the latter

Though well on the way to formation in his first two symphonies, Kancheli s symphonic style lacked a final constituent a voice in the foreground which could serve as a focus against which the background could be contrasted In his *Third Symphony* (1973), he takes this voice concept literally, employing the sweet ethereal tenor of the Georgian folk singer Gamlet Gonashvili Here, the composer makes explicit his theme of a confrontation between spirituality (symbolised by Gonashvili's sorrowful phrases) and brutal worldly might (embodied in the tramp of the marching orchestra) It s as if a Soviet parade passes through a sullen town beyond which the mountains rise in mute symbol of something truer and less crudely tangible With its simplified musical means and clearer design the *Third* is a marked advance over its predecessor At the same time its material is uncompulsive next to

Kancheli's comrades. Opposite page, left to right: Gil Evans, George Crumb, Nino Rota. Above: Stravinsky (2nd right) with Anseimer, Diaghilev and Prokofiev, London 1921

PHOTOS GIL EVANS DEREK RIDGES GEORGE CRUMB DEAN BELCHER NINO ROTA BFI STILLS

that of its successor, the *Fourth*, while its dependence on Gonashvili's inimitably tremulous tone may limit future performances

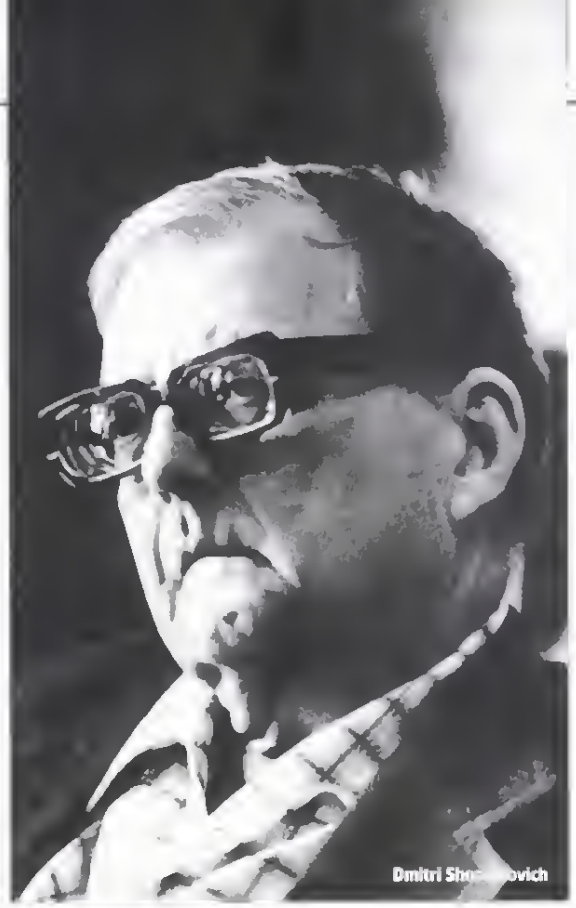
Few Kancheli scores lack a piano, which he usually employs for its bell-like sonorities His *Fourth Symphony* (1975) replaces the piano with actual bells — those of an imagined Renaissance city with many churches Dedicated to the memory of Michelangelo, Kancheli's *Fourth*, like Shostakovich's *Suite On Verses Of Michelangelo*, was written in honour of the quincentary of the Florentine artist-poet's birth

Shostakovich's work is one of his most bitter taking every opportunity to use the fury and longing in Michelangelo's verses to point up parallels with his own situation and that of all dissenting intellectuals under totalitarianism As the earliest example of the modern self-determining artist Michelangelo experienced incessant clashes with the authorities and regularly provoked the betrayal of jealous rivals Like Shostakovich, he spent much of his time evading the demands and petty vengeances of his employers Like Shostakovich, he would pretend to be working on one project whilst secretly finishing another Like Shostakovich (vis-a-vis opera), he felt that he'd been diverted from his true destiny as a sculptor into areas of secondary interest to him namely painting and architecture Like Shostakovich, he was held under financial and moral blackmail, cheated and informed on And like Shostakovich, he was bitter and pessimistic in old age

Since few Soviet artists would have failed to identify the trials of Michelangelo as an anticipation of their own, we can assume that Kancheli's symphony contains resonances akin to those of Shostakovich's work These, though are by no means apparent from the music itself The symphony's scurrying central scherzo, in which one may picture a pursuit through the sunshine and shadows of a medieval Italian city, may be associated with Michelangelo's flight from the wrath of Pope Julius II in 1505 The rest is less concrete

Like most Soviet composers, Kancheli regularly wrote for the cinema (around 30 soundtracks in all) More significantly for the *Fourth Symphony* he became, in 1971 the musical director of Tblisi's Rustaveli Theatre, collaborating with the director Robert Sturua (who later wrote the libretto for *Music For The Living*) During this residency, Kancheli worked with Georgian folk musicians, which may account for his choice of Gamlet Gonashvili for the *Third Symphony* It would certainly explain the *Fourth Symphony*'s anticipation of the *Sixth*'s symbolic pair of folk-ancestral violas (in this case using two gravely sawing violins and, later, a group of three violas) These instruments frame the more Italianate episodes in the *Fourth*, placing a suggestive Georgian proscenium around events peculiar to 'another time' A similar theatricality applies to the symphony's nursery rhyme theme (a 'musical box' simulated by two harps and a celesta) Implying a child's eye view, this motif is comparable with later symbolisms, such as the harpsichord in the *Fifth Symphony* and the boys' voices in *Bright Sorrow* We know from Kancheli's own remarks that, for him, the Child symbolises innocence and the presence, within the world of force and matter of a higher, spiritual dimension But how can this be reconciled with a symphony dedicated to the adult Michelangelo?

In his memoir *Testimony*, Shostakovich outlines the meaning of his opera *Lady Macbeth Of Mtsensk* "It's about how love could have been if the world weren't full of vile things It's the vileness that ruins love And the laws and proprieties and financial worries, and the police state If conditions had been different, love would have been different too ' When Shostakovich harks back to childhood in his music, it's less for the sake of sentimental nostalgia than for memories of a more decent and sensitive world If Michelangelo's struggles with papal and princely power foreshadow the struggles of dissidents against the Soviet state, it becomes less surprising that Kancheli should have added such a childhood symbolism to his Michelangelo symphony For Kancheli, as for Shostakovich love is confronted by power as childhood is confronted by adulthood


Dmitri Shostakovich

The same symbolic theme carries over into Kancheli's *Fifth Symphony* (1977), dedicated to the memory of his parents Here, the background influence is no longer the Georgian folk tradition, but instead the soundtracks and dramatic structures of modern cinema The most violent and most melodic of Kancheli's symphonies, the *Fifth*, with its sharply contrasted groupings and movements, suggests a wordless screenplay, complete with flashbacks and dream sequences The modulations of the work's quiet second section evoke an imagined revisitation of the past in conventional cinematic terms, the music turning slowly through its changes as if through the leaves of a photograph album Indeed, the desolate waltz here might have been penned by Nino Rota and would not seem out of place in the soundtrack to *The Godfather*

Lack of biographical detail on the composer's life prevents us from guessing how close to home are the experiences evoked in this unhappy work Whatever the story behind the *Fifth Symphony*, it's clear that Kancheli's film and theatre work here confer a new dramatic immediacy and a more certain sense of form Formerly cryptic modulations now feel right, not a note seems wasted Only the last movement fails to convince as a natural development of the violent scherzo which precedes it, appearing instead as if transplanted from another score (possibly the andantino from Schubert's *Piano Sonata In A, D959*) Not that this is anything but a fleeting handicap, since this section is enormously powerful in its expression of tragic grief, forecasting the catastrophic catharsis of the *Sixth Symphony* The dark horse among Kancheli's mature symphonies the *Fifth* has immense impact

Kancheli s symphonic style reached perfection in the *Sixth Symphony* (1980) The *Seventh* (1986), which followed his next work *Bright Sorrow* (1985) is a letdown None of its myriad themes is memorable and its layout is chaotic, the impression being of a formula played out This may stem from the work's lack of a focusing 'voice' along the lines of its four predecessors Yet that doesn't account for the similarly lacklustre *Vom Winde Bewein* (1990) — nor everything so far recorded from his comparatively prolific Berlin period The last Kancheli score to be animated with real conviction is *Bright Sorrow* -- and even this lacks the spark of positivity (or in the last resort, of anger)

While Kancheli s life in Georgia during the 80s seems to have been grim, this alone can't explain the extent to which he's gone off the boil since his *Sixth Symphony* At heart, the issue is a spiritual one Simple and stylised, his music has always depended on strength of feeling Under Soviet domination, this was high, although melancholy seems to have preponderated over fortitude during the 80s The ease of life in Germany in the 90s, together with deepening pessimism over the gloomy fate of post-Soviet Georgia, may have taken the protesting edge off Kancheli's art Only time will tell if this is permanent

Recordings of Giya Kancheli s works are issued by the CPO FCM and Olympia labels

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Caetano Veloso

Tested by Peter Shapiro

Born in 1942 in Santo Amaro Da Purificação, a small town in the state of Bahia in North East Brazil, Caetano Veloso was raised in Salvador, the state capital, where he studied guitar and poetry. In 1965 he moved to Rio De Janeiro with his sister and fellow musician Maria Bethania. The following year, he won the Best Lyricist Prize at the Popular Music Festival with his composition "Um Dia". In 1968, along with Gilberto Gil, Gal Costa, Tom Ze and Os Mutantes, Veloso spearheaded the Tropicalismo movement. Standing in stark opposition to the conservative notion of 'Brazilianness' then being enforced across the country by the military government, which had seized power in 1964, Tropicalia was a modernist juxtaposition of bossa nova melodies, samba rhythms, electric guitars, avant garde tape effects, psychedelia, concrete poetry and dissonance. Politically, this radical music managed to offend both left and right, and for their trouble, Veloso and Gil were arrested, had their hippy locks shorn in public by the government, and were forced to live in exile in London for two years. When he returned to Brazil in 1972 Veloso pushed his avant garde bent even further with *Araça Azul* on which he experimented with phonemes, field recordings, tape splicing, blaxploitation brass arrangements and more. Over the next decade Veloso's restless curiosity resulted in records that spanned the world from Nigerian rhythms to whorehouse boleros via Michael Jackson's "Billie Jean". After dabbling with poetry and film directing, Veloso's recording career blossomed once again in partnership with Arto Lindsay. His 1989 and 1991 albums, *Estrangeira* and *Circulado*, are both highly sophisticated records of skronk and melody, politics and whimsy. With such combinations, it's hardly surprising that his latest album, *Omaggio A Federico E Giulietta*, is a love letter to Federico Fellini and Giulietta Masina. The Jukebox took place in Veloso's hotel room in London.

ANTONIO CARLOS JOBIM

"Arquitetura De Morar" from *Urubu* (Warner Bros)

I was thinking of the kinship between bossa nova and French impressionist music. It's beautiful.

Do you know who it is?

Is it Jobim? It sounds very much like the French impressionists, but it's so Brazilian, right?

It's like a mini-orchestral work. Why do you think it's so Brazilian?

Well, the phrases and the feeling. And there is this sweetness and it's a little melancholic, but also luminous. All these are Brazilian, or the conjunction of these attributes is mostly Brazilian.

Jobim conceived the album as a homage to Heitor Villa-Lobos [the 1920s Brazilian composer].

Yeah, well, very much like Villa-Lobos. Villa-Lobos was deeply Brazilian in all those senses and he was very much influenced by the French impressionists, by more than them, of course, but by them mostly.

There seems to be a unique strain of modernism in Brazil, where it's natural to combine very popular traditions with very high art traditions. Is there something specifically about Brazil that allows this to happen?

There must be. Brazil is very — how can I say? — full of originalities and singularities, like we are this huge country in the Southern hemisphere, in America, and we speak Portuguese and we're the only ones who speak Portuguese in the Americas. We are racially very mixed and we have looked at this mixture in a very particular way, which doesn't mean that it has been without conflict, it only means that it is in a very different, particular way. We have lots of singularities, for good and for bad. We are also very unbalanced, socially and economically and historically, because we have lots of backwards things and lots of passion for the most modern, contemporary attitudes. With a naturalness we approach all these worlds and we feel unbalanced, but at the same time somehow in a joyful way and in a playful way. So, all these things contribute to those things that came with your question. I think [laughs].

SERGIO MENDES & BRASIL 66

"Fool On The Hill" from *Greatest Hits* (A&M)

[Sings along] This is Sergio Mendes, I remember. Very funny, very good [laughs]. American girl singing with the Brazilian phrase [he sings the melody line]. This sounds very much like Djavan from ten years later. Funny. [He imitates the singer and laughs] It's nice because they had something to do with Herb Alpert and also with Burt Bacharach, who themselves had something to do with bossa nova. Then, Sergio Mendes made his bossa nova in California. This is very ironic because one very important thing that did happen was that the recording of "A Garota De Ipanema" by Joao Gilberto and Stan Getz with Astrud Gilberto singing in English sold more than The Beatles' biggest hit that year. And the album, *Getz/Gilberto*, was a better seller than The Beatles for a little while, which was really incredible. So, this recording by Sergio Mendes is enriched by all these things in my mind, it feeds on them. It sounds like a precious thing [laughs] because it refers to many funny relationships between Brazilian pop music and international pop music.

Were you aware of how bossa nova was perceived in America as kind of Easy Listening for the leisure classes?

Yeah. Well, Sergio Mendes was considered in Brazil as a very talented musician who sold out, who went to the United States and sold his soul [laughs]. Everyone in Brazil would think of him like that. Now, I feel what I just described. We knew then that bossa nova was considered that way, but we knew better. We knew that at the beginning bossa nova only appealed to the *best* jazz musicians, because João Gilberto is of course one of the best pop musicians ever, and Antonio Carlos Jobim is one of the best songwriters ever. The best in the United States noticed this first, the first fans of bossa nova were Miles Davis and Stan Getz and Gerry Mulligan, really great jazz musicians. But soon it became this craze, this fashion of an agreeable, rhythmic, from-the-tropics, half-sophisticated thing, which is a pity. I bought this box with everything from the collaboration

PHOTO OF CAETANO VELOSO: MATT ANKER

between Miles Davis and Gil Evans, and one of the albums is *Quiet Nights* and "Quiet Nights" is the title of [Antonio Carlos Jobim's] "Corcovado" in English Jobim's song is there and, fantastically, Miles had chosen a song that was not a bossa nova song — it was an old Brazilian music that João Gilberto had recorded and transformed into a new, modern thing [Gilberto] could go back to the traditional Brazilian compositions and recreate and reveal the complexity and richness in those old songs He was the one doing the most modern music in Brazil and he would go back to tradition and point to the fundamental aspect of old jewels

Anyway, Davis recorded that and an old anonymous song called "Prenda Minha" it's from the south of Brazil and everybody knows it, it's like "My Bonnie Lies Over The Ocean" for Brazilians He recorded it, but he didn't improvise He only played the melody three or four times and the arrangements by Gil Evans would go behind his playing the melody He just signed it as if they had written the song and put the title, "Song Number 2" [laughs] In *Livro* [released last year], referring to that, we used a pastiche of Gil Evans style of arrangement and I was going to name the album *Prenda Minha* because of that, but then I thought it would be too secret Then I made a show from the record and in the show I sang "Prenda Minha" and recorded it live, and the new record is called *Prenda Minha* I sing and the orchestra does very much what Gil Evans did, so it's a joke and a reference But what I was saying was that when you read the notes in the box you read that Miles Davis and Gil Evans, who were in love with bossa nova at the beginning, gave up the project because they started noticing that bossa nova was becoming something that was not quite, you know, and they had to maintain their reputations The whole story makes it a little sad when you read it It tells a lot about the relationship between the acknowledgement of bossa nova by American musicians and the Americans in general, and therefore by the world It sounds a little complicated, but I hope that you can see that these things go behind that recording by Sergio Mendes

YOKO ONO & JOHN LENNON

"Side One" from *Unfinished Music No 1: Two Virgins* (Rykodisc)

[Laughing] What's that? Trance? Tech-House? That's the good question about it right?

It was actually recorded in 1968. It's Yoko Ono and John Lennon, something they did in their home studio.

That brings up the whole thing that was in my question When John Lennon did "Revolution No 9" I was then already thinking about the natural attraction that pop musicians feel towards avant garde, 20th century serious music Mostly, people who go to concert halls and listen to classical radio stations don't share any of that attraction to that kind of thing There's this little minority who graze Varese and Cage and even Webern and Boulez and Stockhausen, but most people who pay attention to serious music don't care very much for those people They still listen to Brahms and Beethoven and the French impressionists and, let's say Stravinsky, but those people, those avant garde radicals of the 20th century, are not well-consumed [laughs] by serious people — in numbers I mean But somehow, pop musicians have been attracted to them, and "Revolution No 9" was the most radical example of that attraction But that attraction was already in *Sgt Pepper's* and, of course, in lots of things that were done by Frank Zappa Nowadays, these dance, Techno, whatever, things tend to approach that kind of avant garde thing That's why I asked the ironic question when I first heard this Don't you think it's really fascinating that these people might listen to Varese and John Cage and they're people who came from dance music, and there are some who don't listen to them, but come to sound a little bit like them? Don't you think that this is all a little fascinating? I do

Parts of this make me think of Rogerio Duprat's productions for Os Mutantes. Did your awareness of avant garde composition come through Duprat or The Beatles?

My interest in the avant garde came mostly from Rogerio Duprat and from poets in São Paulo who write concrete poetry and they love these musicians They showed these people to us But what we were doing had already some little thing to do with The Beatles, but only because we had chosen to, in our compositions and our interviews, refer to everything that was banished by the 'circle of good taste' that was created after bossa nova, although we were the most radical bossa nova lovers We still are, I am All the bossa nova followers were in a defensive posture both to whorehouse, slow sambas and to rock 'n' roll, to Argentinian tango, Portuguese fado and traditional Brazilian samba because all these things to those bossa nova followers seemed to be too regressive musically as compared to the harmonic sophistication and subtlety in rhythm that came with bossa nova We loved harmonic sophistication and subtlety in rhythm, and the courage of the bossa nova pioneers and their genius, but we didn't like this defensive attitude that came with the followers who belonged to our generation So we decided to use in our compositions elements from all these banished, bad taste, rubbish things, including rock 'n' roll In fact rock 'n' roll was considered rubbish by everybody The turning point happened here in England with The Beatles mostly, but also with The Rolling Stones, Traffic and other people I think that were it not for the fact that they were English it would have never happened It's very funny because to love rock 'n' roll was something like young, unlearned people did in Brazil And the Americans would look at what they had produced through the English in a more respectful way, so it changed everything So, what we were doing in Brazil was in a way similar to that, with all the rubbish We were reacting to that defensiveness because we didn't think it was healthy and we didn't think that it was needed by Brazilian popular music, because we trusted its force, its strength its power In the end we recognised that The Beatles were doing something very similar to what we *wanted* to do, although musically it had to be a different thing, but the basic attitude had some kind of parallel I think this is all about that [laughs]

BETTY CARTER

"Every Time We Say Goodbye" from *Night And Day: The Cole Porter Songbook* (Verve)

Nice phrasing, yes? [He sings along] Funny Who's that?

Betty Carter.

I thought it was Betty Carter, but she only sang a little bit I have never heard that recording I love her phrasing When she recorded that with Ray Charles, she would sing everything with those vibratoless notes that I love But then I saw her in Brazil with a small group and she would completely transform it She was wonderful, really jazzy and crazy There she goes phrasing in a twisted way

I know you're a fan of Cole Porter.

Yes, of course I love those American composers They are the best, they are the best songwriters Cole Porter is a miracle because he wrote the words and the music and sometimes you don't believe it [laughs] Sometimes Chico Buarque is like that He wrote alone and he's like that If you understood Portuguese you'd think, you would understand what I am saying When Tom Jobim writes, it's just like that, but only in Portuguese The feeling's Brazilian, the rhythm and eveything, but the quality and the surprise of beauty is the same Maybe more so with Chico Buarque [Jobim's] "Aguas De Marco" is like that The words and eveything, you don't believe the naturalness and how rich the rhymes and rhythms and sounds and everything are, the ideas But Cole Porter was maybe the most unbelievable at that Those duos like the Gershwins and Rogers and Hart and some others did the same, but Porter did it alone Irving Berlin did it alone too, but not as refined as Cole He's incredible "You're The Top" is unbelievable, how pop it is

And his rhymes are. . .

Yeah *"You're the melody of a symphony by Strauss/You're an Ascot bonnet/A Shakespeare sonnet/You're Mickey Mouse"* [Laughs] Mickey Mouse right after Shakespeare He was pop art and at the same time very elegant

BECK

"Tropicalia" from *Mutations* (Geffen)

[Immediately] That's Beck, right? I was touring the United States and he showed up He came on stage to sing with me He had suggested four songs of mine for us to do, for me to choose among those four, and I found his choices very interesting

What were they?

"Baby", 'Maria Bethania" — and "Maria Bethania" was my favourite of his choices because it was a song I wrote in English when I was living in England and I used to be ashamed of those songs and I kind of wanted to forget them — "Coração Vagabundo" and "Super-Bacana", which is a song from my first solo album In the end, I decided for "Maria Bethania" and "Baby" When I sang a song written by my son and all the musicians danced, I invited him to dance He was very good doing that break thing that he does, his version of breakdancing He's very sweet It's very interesting that these young guys

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are interested in what we were doing back in the 60s. Of course, it's just part of their attraction to the 60s as a whole, so Brazil comes also because we did those things that became known as Tropicalismo. On the other hand, it's a way of acknowledging the richness and the importance of Brazilian popular music as a whole. It's the other side of the movement that made Miles Davis and Gil Evans ashamed of doing their bossa nova thing. It's the opposite of that, but it's also complementary.

BOB DYLAN

"Like A Rolling Stone" from *Live 1966* (Columbia Legacy)

You can't really hear it, but this is Bob Dylan in 1966 on tour in the UK. He'd just gone electric and someone in the crowd yelled, '*Judas!*'. It's probably the most celebrated example of crowd heckling ever, but it's nothing compared to your 1968 recording of "E Proibido Proibir", where it sounds like the audience are baying for your blood.

Yeah, they were booing. The scandal with the electric guitars was one year before "E Proibido Proibir". "E Proibido Proibir" was a new happening, but the problem happened in 67 with "Alegria Alegria". That was the first time I went on stage with a rock 'n' roll group with electric guitars and everything. I didn't know about Bob Dylan going electric. I knew about Bob Dylan as a protest songwriter and I heard some of his records, but they never put the lyrics in the sleeves and I could never understand. It's funny, I can speak English, but it's hard to understand. I only had studied in high school, so I found Bob Dylan very boring. But then I heard *Bringing It All Back Home* and I found it wonderful. Although I couldn't understand most of the words, I liked the timbre of his voice and the way he delivered it. It doesn't sound angry like it does to English speaking people; it sounded modern, strange and anti-showbusiness. It didn't sound like somebody who had to sing well or have their voice as a crystal or pronounce clearly or be agreeable or pleasant to anybody. He sounded also weak. My mother would say, 'What happened to this poor guy? Has he got a cold?' [He laughs and imitates Dylan] But that sounded modern and free to me, so I liked it. Finally, I found his lyrics and I could follow.

I saw him here at the Isle of Wight Festival and I saw him last year in Brazil with The Rolling Stones. He was opening for them. In the middle of the show, Mick Jagger would sing "Like A Rolling Stone" with him and that was fantastic, because the crowd was enormous and everyone was screaming. I was touched. In fact, "Like A Rolling Stone" is quite a song. It's beautiful. My favourite is "It's Alright Ma, I'm Only Bleeding". I dream of recording that song. It's a crazy idea, but I do. I love it. It's so long, I don't think I'll be able to memorise it, but I love it. Also, "Don't Think Twice, It's Alright". I was reading this piece in *The New Yorker* a couple of years ago about Woody Allen, very *New Yorker*. It had to do with Mia Farrow and the whole mess and everything and the guy who wrote it said that Woody Allen, referring to "Just Like A Woman", was making fun of Dylan. And the guy who wrote the piece said something like: 'Now we can see that Woody Allen was right'. It only made me think: 'Who is tiny Woody Allen compared to giant Bob Dylan?' [Laughs]

You wouldn't say that if you were from New York.

[Laughs] No. I like Woody Allen. I think he's interesting and important.

ARTO LINDSAY TRIO

"Be Great" from *Aggregates 1-26* (Knitting Factory Works)

[Ironically] Is that from downtown New York? [Laughs] It's so downtown. [He laughs again]

Do you know who it is?

Uh, was that John Zorn? No.

You've worked with him.

Yeah, it sounds very much like Arto. I thought it was Arto, but I didn't recognise it. Maybe it's older? Or very new?

1995.

I love *Mundo Civilizado*. I think it's a fantastic album. The song that you chose was very, very beautiful. My son loves his more radical stuff, so do I, but I don't know it well. It's very interesting because maybe now they are going to acknowledge Arto's importance or the interest of his music. I remember that a record by The Ambitious Lovers as good as *Greed* was never recognised as anything by the American critics. I was telling a friend of mine in Rio recently that if the relation between Brazil and the United States was the opposite in weight, I would do to Arto what David Byrne does to Tom Zé.

Do you see a relationship between his noise music and his Brazilian records?

Yes, I do. Arto grew up in Brazil and accepted the Tropicalismo movement as something that was happening when he was growing up. He was influenced as a person by what we were doing. I think his American thing is trying to do something that is like what he liked in the Tropicalistas' thing. So, when he does something that is very influenced by Brazilian music or does something that is openly experimental, it has the same connection to Brazilian music.

TRISTAN TZARA/RICHARD HUELSENBECK/MARCEL JANCO

"L'Amiral Cherche Une Maison À Louer" from *Futurism & Dadaism Reviewed* (Sub Rosa)

[Laughing] Very good. what's that?

It's a recording made by some of the original Dadaists.

Yes, very good, very good.

It reminded me a lot of your album *Araça Azul*.

Yes, it sounds very much like that. This is much better. On *Araça Azul*, the recording, I couldn't produce it properly, so it lacks depth. You have the ideas, but the sound, I don't know, is a little emplastered.

What led you to make that record?

Well, I was coming back from London, from two and a half years of exile, and I was in Brazil and I wanted to go to the studio and benefit from the liberty that I had. I was back, I could be there, I was a big name there, I was recognised for what I had done. People who didn't like me before I had left were like adoring me because I had been a victim of the dictatorship. So the left, who before had reacted against me, were with me then. So I said: 'I'll be alone in the studio and I'll experiment. I'll try anything.' I created this dogma for myself: I will not write a song before I go to the studio, I will not prepare anything. I will go and I'll be alone with the engineer with no one else to see what I'm doing, I'll be entirely experimental in all senses. I couldn't avoid it. I had to test myself. I also had to decide whether I was going to continue to do popular music, so I would go to the studio and do things like, 'I will never again be shy in the studio'. That was that.

MARGARETH MENEZES

"Ifá, Um Canto Pra Subir" from *Belezo Tropicol 2* (Luaka Bop)

Who's that?

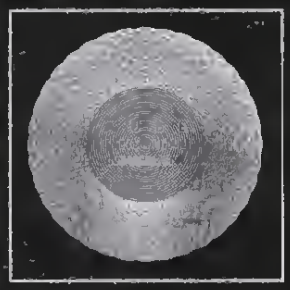
Margareth Menezes.

Ah, Margareth. I know her well. I didn't recognise the music. I love her. She has the most beautiful skin. Yeah, she is... delicious. This kind of music from Bahia, really big Carnival in Bahia, became very successful in Brazil. She was left at heart because some other people became very commercial, so she was kind of forgotten. That's why I don't know her recordings. I know her and I see her singing, but her records do not get played everywhere.

Compared to bossa nova, Bahian music is very African, very rhythmic and percussive. What do you take from it?

Well, I am from Bahia. I grew up there. I'm still there because I have a house in Rio and a house in Bahia and I go back and forth. This kind of thing, I love the Carnival scene in Bahia. I have loved it when it was big for Bahia, not big for everyone, so I'm proud of it. It makes me happy. Sometimes it's musically very vulgar, which is not Margareth's case. Not in this recording or most things she does. Some others who are more commercial sound very vulgar. But it's so good, they are very good professionals, incredibly good. I think that vulgar music for Carnival is quite adequate.

PHOTO OF CAETANO VELOSO: MATT ANKER



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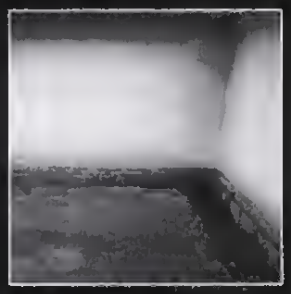

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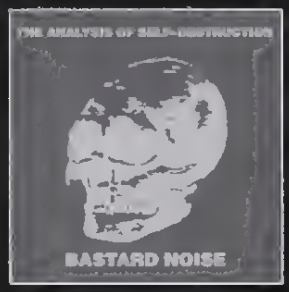

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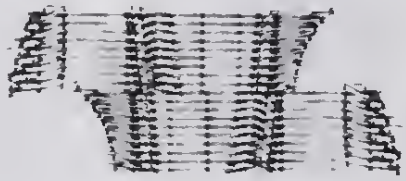

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Until now poet and percussionist **Angus MacLise** was just a footnote in The Velvet Underground including John Cale, Tony Conrad and Ira Cohen, recall the impact of his flickering presence on the

flaming creature reborn

"Angus was one of those Lower East Side icons who crept out of the cracks in the sidewalk," remembers John Cale. "That period was dimly lit, a very inspiring time. A lot of the people of that time, like Angus and Harry Smith, people involved in really arcane doings in the dark corners of New York, were so energetic that they really left behind a trail. The fact that someone could evolve into someone like Angus or Harry Smith is remarkable. It's not everyone's cup of tea, obviously, but the idea of usefulness in society expands a little as a result of their activities."

If for most of the planet the 60s ended with Altamont, or Watergate, or Manson, or the break up of The Beatles, for a much smaller and esoteric section of the population it may have ended with the death of Angus MacLise in Kathmandu on the summer solstice of 1979. A master percussionist, poet, calligrapher and world traveller, MacLise is best known, if at all, as a founder member of The Velvet Underground and for his performances with La Monte Young. But a survey of his activities in the two decades of his adult life — he was 41 when he died — reveals him to be at the epicentre of New York's early 60s avant garde movement and its later psychedelic era.

In his short lifetime he recorded relatively little and released even less. Up until recently all that he had left behind was a flexidisc, a very limited 7", a bootleg LP and a couple of hopelessly obscure compilation appearances. But now, the US label Siltbreeze/Quakebasket has remedied that with the release of *Invasion Of Thunderbolt Pagoda*, a compilation of unreleased recordings named after MacLise's soundtrack to photographer Ira Cohen's film. Heard alongside his contributions to the two volumes of music for New York film maker Jack Smith's legendary underground movies which have been curated and released by Tony Conrad on his Audio Artkive imprint, the Siltbreeze CD makes it easier to understand why MacLise's friends still speak in awe of him 20 years after his death. "Angus's importance and influence can't easily be exaggerated and the only reason he's obscure is that he didn't care if he was rich or famous," maintains his 70s collaborator Bill Breeze, a highly respected occultist and latterday Psychic TV participant who studied North Indian classical music for many years. La Monte Young posits Angus as "the most imaginative drummer that I ever played with".

"I've always been stunned that no one has found a way to talk about what Angus contributed," says Tony Conrad, who marvels that MacLise "never played a rhythm. Angus achieved the sort of variety found in a piece like Stockhausen's *Zyklus* using a bongo drum! He went in between the beats — the flow of Angus's music is like the flow of speech, and not like the flow of chanting or the artificial beat of feet marching. Everything is inhabited by the wonder of irregular movements that you see in dragonflies or darting schools of fish. The music switches direction at lightning velocity and shoots off in a new direction, then switches off in another direction in a microsecond — it sets up its own rhythm but fails to sustain it for more than a second or two."

MacLise once told La Monte Young that the sound of rain falling was the model for his intricate rhythms. Conrad also recalls that Angus could take up any instrument and play it beautifully, during one rehearsal he picked up Conrad's violin and "played the shit out of it — immediately". Conrad stresses that for all his technical expertise, MacLise "understood thoroughly that the poetry of expression that poured through his fingertips was the direction of his spirit and discovery". MacLise made some incredible recordings on the cembalum (a stringed instrument played with sticks), including his

Below: Angus MacLise in India, early 70s. Opposite: MacLise as The Methedrine Cardinal photographed inside Ira Cohen's mylar chamber, New York, mid-60s

story. 20 years after his death, his associates, New York avant garde. Words: Alan Licht

soundtracks for Ron Rice's 1964 *Chumlum* (which Conrad recorded) and Gerard Malanga's 1969 *The Children* (an excerpt from the latter, "Cloud Asylum", is included on the Sub Rosa label's new, Malanga-curated *Up From The Archives* CD), as well as an untitled piece on Ira Cohen's *The Majoon Traveller* CD, also released by Sub Rosa, and an out-of-print triple LP compilation called *Breathe On The Living* "Angus was great on suitcases, or anything, he could play anything with his hands," Ira Cohen remembers

Born in Connecticut, MacLise attended high school in Queens, New York, where he joined the marching band and played tympani in the school orchestra, performing Stravinsky's *Rite Of Spring* among other pieces He also studied jazz technique privately and became friends with the late poet and film maker Piero Heliczer After a brief stint in the army, MacLise travelled to Europe and hooked up with Heliczer again in Paris, where they founded the Dead Language Press, which published some of Angus's early poetry La Monte Young was immediately struck by its quality when he came across a copy of MacLise's *Straight Farthest Blood Towards* in San Francisco's City Lights Books store

Heliczer and MacLise landed back in New York in 1961 and Angus began performing in a trio with La Monte (on guitar) and Andy Warhol assistant Billy Linich (aka Billy Name, on voice drone and guitar) They were joined by Marian Zazeela singing drone, who lived in the same building as MacLise and Heliczer and had met Young at their apartment Tony Conrad attended a series of concerts that Angus arranged for the group at the 10-4 Gallery and was immediately impressed They were, he says, combining some of the Dadaist concepts of Fluxus, the drone of Indian music and "a reversion of a kind of formal, high art music to what was an improvisational kind of music" Soon, Conrad approached Young about the possibilities of collaborating with the group Conrad's then-roommate was Jack Smith, whose *Flaming Creatures* — one of the cornerstones of the underground film movement — was intended as a vehicle for Zazeela The film's soundtrack includes a minute of music by the Young/MacLise/Zazeela/Linich group

In 1962 the Dead Language Press published MacLise's calendar/poem *Year*, which gave proper names to each of the 365 days La Monte Young has used the calendar to date many of his tapes of this period for instance, "Bb Dorian Blues (Fifth Day Of The Hammer)" "His idea of time was outside anybody else's," says John Cale, relating MacLise's calendar to his timekeeping and his lifestyle By 1963 Cale, then a classically trained violist who had been studying contemporary composition in the US on a Leonard Bernstein scholarship, had moved to New York He sought out Young and began playing with him, Zazeela, Conrad and MacLise in a combination that Young dubbed The Theatre Of Eternal Music At this point La Monte was executing dizzying runs on a sopranino saxophone pitched against the monolithic Conrad/Cale/Zazeela drone, while MacLise's bongos interfaced with the sax on a complex, intuitive level As Tony Conrad has pointed out, the bongos compared favourably to Indian tablas With Young's sax approximating a shenai and the others essentially contributing a highly amplified tamboura equivalent, the group was groundbreaking as an East/West confluence Indian music was not at all well known in the West at the time, and this thoroughly electric music took the influence much further than contemporaneous experiments by John Coltrane, singer-songwriter Sandy Bull or the UK folk guitarist Davey Graham Although remembered as a highly disciplined group, MacLise was the wild card, who might not make it to the rehearsal or concert on time, if at all Cale recalls how he would sometimes show up at Velvet Underground rehearsals as they were ending and start playing while the others were talking and relaxing "Angus was a freefloating bird who would show up to these rehearsals," he says, "but as soon as he got wind of the notion that The Velvet Underground, or The Primitives as we were called in those days, had to play for a fixed period of time at a certain date and at a certain time of day he sort of revolted and said, 'I don't get it' But you couldn't be angry with him, he was too pacific a person You could talk to him but whether it made any difference to him, I don't think the point was taken Then he disappeared to Afghanistan and India more often"

During this period MacLise Conrad Cale (who all lived in the same building at 56 Ludlow Street), Terry Riley and saxophonist Terry Jennings would often play together in each other's apartments, away from The Theatre Of Eternal Music's formal rehearsals Some of the music produced during their impromptu sessions is documented on the two

PHOTOS IRA COHEN

Jack Smith CDs on Audio Artkive. Their unstructured recordings display an intense, drug-driven take on different World musics that resonated naturally with Smith's own ecstatic celluloid universe of Maria Montez-inspired exotica. Cale describes some of "the attributes of a lot of similar events going on on the Lower East Side at the time. Odd groupings of people would go round visiting other people and start playing, show movies or read poetry or whatever. There was a bunker mentality among the art community there because they were breaking out into film. With 8mm, film was becoming a little less expensive to use. I went to a screening of Jack Smith's movie, *Flaming Creatures*, which contained full frontal scenes and a lot of funny scenes, tweaking genitalia. In New York frontal nudity was illegal, so whenever they screened the film for patrons of the arts, friends or whatever, you had to be careful that it wasn't a public event, or you'd have the law coming down on you. . At some of these films Angus and La Monte would be playing in front of the screen, which is why the Cinematheque [a New York film and multimedia space] was so interesting. Mixed media became very much in vogue, and eventually the absurdity of the law about frontal nudity in New York led to it being changed, and the ramifications of that went far and wide. In Rome and Hollywood people suddenly started reacting to the fact that, hey, there is something going on in New York that is a little microcosm of what could go on anywhere."

The sessions made waves in other ways: the recording of Conrad and MacLise backing Smith's reading of "Les Evening Gowns Damnées" on acoustic guitar and bowed mandola is surely only a heartbeat away from the electric guitar and viola accompaniment to Lou Reed's lyrics in The Velvet Underground a few years later.

Here and opposite (bottom): Angus and Hetty MacLise. Opposite (top): MacLise with Gerard Malanga

Now in the thick of New York's avant scene, Angus MacLise's list of collaborators included John Vaccaro's Theater Of The Ridiculous, Yoko Ono (on a piece called "Music For Dance"), underground film maker and archivist Jonas Mekas, and Jerry Jofen. A neglected but important member of the underground film and multimedia community, Jofen's *Voyage* features music by him and Angus. MacLise was also participating in various Fluxus events, appearing in the films of Jack Smith and Piero Heliczer, while also scoring the latter's *The Autumn Feast* with Conrad and the director. The New York scene during this period was characterised by an astonishing intermingling of the arts, and as Sterling Morrison recounted in California novelist Dennis Cooper's literary magazine *Little Caesar*, "Angus was the most rabidly artistic of us all, with interests in literature, dance, music, film, lights, slides, incense, diaphones and religion, all at once."

"There was something happening in those years which has never been fully taken into consideration," amplifies Ira Cohen, "which is electronic multimedia shamanism, a more Renaissance attitude: people like Angus, I've done film making, poetry, photography, people like Jack Smith who wrote, drew, made films, performance art, Julian Beck was also a painter and poet, Brion Gysin was a fantastic painter, calligrapher, writer. We were all friends and we all influenced each other." On a personal level, Cohen remembers MacLise as "a person who connected different people. He moved through the city on speed."

When Angus MacLise left for a trip abroad in 1964, his musical influence was such that his departure prompted La Monte Young to drop the rhythmic element in his groups. Indeed, he only reincorporated rhythm into his music when he formed The Forever Bad Blues Band in the 90s. Upon his return, MacLise began playing with Cale, Sterling Morrison and Lou Reed in the group that eventually became The Velvet Underground. Public performances with Angus were few; he quit the group after hearing they had a gig at a New Jersey high school and it was made clear to him that they had to appear at a specified time and place, and would be paid for the trouble. However, The Velvets with MacLise did improvise soundtracks for two multimedia presentations organised by Angus and Piero Heliczer at the Cinematheque — *Launching Of The Dreamweapon* and *Rites Of The Dreamweapon*. Heliczer taped the music and used it at subsequent showings of his films. The group was also taped by CBS News for a segment about the making of an underground film. Broadcast on New Year's Eve 1965, it shows Heliczer madly filming the group playing "Venus In Furs" (the track can be heard on the four CD Velvet Underground bootleg set *Caught Between The Twisted Stars*). MacLise and Reed also collaborated on a manifesto of sorts, called "Concerning The Rumour That Red China Has Cornered The Methedrine Market And Is Busy Adding Paranoia Drops To Upset The Mental Balance Of The United States". The title, and lines like "Our band is the Western equivalent to the cosmic dance of Shiva — Playing as Babylon goes up in flames", bear Angus's unmistakable stamp, revealing the depth of his influence in the group at this time. Bill Breeze remembers the "inherent tension in The Velvet Underground's music between the unstructured approach of Angus and the poetry and songwriting of Lou Reed, who is above all a metrical poet. I think Angus eventually being replaced in VU by a woman drummer is significant, as he himself was very feminine as a percussionist in his sensitivity and nuancing — not a testosterone-laden rock drummer at all."

John Cale recalls the MacLise-era VU slightly differently "If you look at the box set *Peel Slowly And See*, there are quite a few versions of the group before we went electric, and he did fit in with the early stuff because it was very easy going and it was all improvisation Nothing was ever structured, that's the point He would always show up, if he showed up, then he would cook a meal or something and start playing, but there was no reason why, nobody said, right, let's sit down and play That was always mystifying how did it start? Angus was sort of just a poet who carried a set of tablas around and would start playing on anything, and it was kind of this pleasant dribbling of rhythm "

MacLise rejoined the group as a temporary member for two weeks of shows in Chicago in 1966 when Reed was hospitalised with hepatitis He was suggested by the Exploding Plastic Inevitable's whipdancer Gerard Malanga, who had met Angus through Heliczer a few years earlier Cale played organ and sang, Maureen Tucker played bass, and Sterling Morrison guitar with Malanga and MacLise playing tablas This line-up's versions of "Heroin" and "Venus In Furs" can be heard in Ronald Nameth's film *Exploding Plastic Inevitable* but unfortunately there is no footage of the group True to form, MacLise showed up half an hour late for one performance and continued to play for 30 minutes after it ended to make up the time He and Malanga did a lot of hanging out together, turning up everywhere from the Bahai Temple to the offices of the prestigious literary journal *Poetry A Magazine In Verse*

During a trip to San Francisco MacLise did some performances with Daniel Moore's Floating Lotus Magic Opera Company a kind of street theatre enterprise, and met his future wife, Hetty McGee, an illustrator for *The SF Oracle* and *The East Village Other* They were married by Timothy Leary in a psychedelic ceremony in Golden Gate Park Travelling back to New York they were busted in Oklahoma City for possession of cannabis A series of benefit concerts were held back in New York featuring Angus and Hetty MacLise, Conrad, Henry Flynt, Jackson MacLow, La Monte Young and Marian Zazeela, among others It was during this time that Ira Cohen began shooting *Invasion Of Thunderbolt Pagoda* using his mylar chamber, which was essentially a large box lined with distorting mirrors which produced all sorts of incredible warped reflections (as documented in the film and the CD cover, and in Cohen's artwork for John McLaughlin's *Devotion* LP and Spirit's *Twelve Dreams Of Dr Sardonicus*) By now Angus and Hetty were playing with Loren Standlee (on alto flute), Ziska Baum (on Indian dulcimer) and Raja Samyana (guitar) in a group loosely known as The Universal Mutant Repertory Company, a name coined by Cohen to describe the stars of his film (that is, the friends he photographed inside the mylar chamber)

Standlee recalls that the group used four microphones, each going through an echo chamber, and that each member was "doing this rhythmical thing with breathing and chanting from the depths of psychedelia [It was] trance music — we were trying to get as high as we possibly could" The music was intensely rhythmic with MacLise's frantic hand drumming propelling it forward Standlee remembers some sessions lasting up to 11 hours, fuelled, of course, by "every conceivable drug"

These same friends, plus the likes of photographers Benno Friedman and Don Snyder, were also playing informal music together at Friedman's house in the Berkshires convening tribal drum orchestras and similar freeform ensembles with harmoniums, flutes, hand drums and various stringed instruments. As Standlee put it, 'Angus would pretty much play with everybody, he basically wandered around going from place to place with his drums, but playing any instrument." In 1969 MacLise even attempted some kind of offstage tribal music performance at Woodstock, and in fact he and Hetty can be glimpsed dancing in Michael Wadleigh's film of the festival He also engineered a series of performances at New York's St Mark's Church in 1970 called Epiphanies, featuring himself and Hetty, usually joined by Loren Standlee and Ziska Baum *Invasion Of Thunderbolt Pagoda* was shown during one of their concerts, and a 39 minute long tape of the performance provides the centrepiece of the Siltbreeze CD (A brief excerpt from the same performance, called "The Joyous Lake", had previously appeared as a flexidisc in the "Dreamweapon" issue of the art magazine *Aspen*, under the guest editorship of Angus and Hetty)

Around 1971 Angus and Hetty MacLise moved to India, and then to Nepal In Asia, Angus concentrated more on poetry and calligraphy, perhaps, than music, starting a literary magazine, *Ting-Pa*, which was printed on rice paper, and collaborating with Ira Cohen (who had also moved to Nepal) on various projects Angus also made one-of-a kind books out of birchbark, with calligraphy, photographs and other ephemera stapled to the pages In Nepal Cohen published MacLise's poem "The Subliminal Report" on his Bardo Matrix imprint But Angus still made a lot of tapes in India, including the brief shortwave radio excerpt heard on the Siltbreeze CD, as well as a commentary on a ceremony in a South Indian village on Lord Krishna's birthday which was released in the late 80s as a 7" single on Fierce

MacLise made only occasional trips back to the West during the 70s He did one rare poetry reading in New York in 1976, and participated in a trio there with Bill Breeze on viola and Marc Slivka on prepared guitar and flute through most of 1978, playing together in Breeze's West Village loft and later in MacLise's room at the Chelsea Hotel Like the groupings of the 60s it was a very spontaneous unit, just a bunch of friends playing freeform, Indian-influenced music Both Breeze and Slivka were in their late teens/early twenties at this time Slivka, whose parents were close friends with Dylan Thomas and who was himself personally acquainted with John Cage (not to mention Borbetomagus's Donald Miller), died not long after MacLise Angus had began work on an opera based on Monteverdi's *Orfeo* when he died in Kathmandu in 1979 He left a manuscript with Ira Cohen, who succeeded in staging it at the Kitchen in New York some years ago as *The $500 Opera* Little of MacLise's music was used, however Instead it featured an improvising group that included David Shea, Perry Robinson and Rashied Ali, among others, with dancers, vocalists, texts, lights and slides in a brief return to the multimedia shamanism of the 60s

When Angus died, he left behind a widow, Hetty, and their son, Ossian, who lived for a long time in a Tibetan monastery where he was the first Western child to be recognised as a tulku — or reincarnated lama Earlier this year, Hetty and Ossian were spotted in London, attending a John Cale concert "A nice surprise," remarks Cale

Angus MacLise had always used copious amounts of drugs, especially speed, and it has long been assumed that his death was drug related However, the official cause was hypoglycemia and Ira Cohen has speculated that Angus was in fact a diabetic without knowing it "He was a poet's poet, he lived the life of a poet, and everybody kind of knew he wasn't going to be with us that long," says Loren Standlee

"For Angus, as a truly possessed poetic spirit, there was an affirmation that flowed through the drug experience that was extremely important to him," expands Tony Conrad Although many of his activities and interests were in step with those of the Aquarian Age, he was also beyond it "He sort of wandered through this time zone but he wasn't totally of it," speculates Ziska Baum Tony Conrad adds, "He was involved with myth, in a way which seemed medieval, which he brought to the surface of actuality in the mid-20th century like a mystic monk living in our very midst." Bill Breeze compares him to a "druidic bard — a hard-partying woman-loving intensely religious sort of bard"

"Angus was always involved in the origins of things, like Voc, the original Hindu deity of sound," concludes Ira Cohen, "and from Voc comes the word 'voice' He was always into the primordial, even the pre-primordial" □ Invasion Of Thunderbolt Pagoda *is out now on Siltbreeze* Up From The Archives *is out now on Sub Rosa*

PHOTOS ANGUS AND HETTY MACLISE IRA COHEN MACLISE AND MALANGA GERARD MALANGA

Like an electronic Nicholson Baker, Matt Herbert finds enchantment in the everyday. Growing up in the Kent countryside far from metropolitan codes, has given this likeable, modest producer a fascination with the elusiveness of normality. The 11 tracks on his diaphanous 1998 collaboration with Dani Siciliano, *Around The House*, are programmed as a tour through a domestic landscape, each side's label presenting a floor plan showing the movements of the duo, amplifying the emotional contours of interior space. In Herbert's reinvented House productions, sampladelia converges with minimal musicality. Throughout the 11 minute long "In The Kitchen", the penultimate track from *Around The House*, there is a giant regular pulsation, you're in an architectronic space as sensitive as a heartbeat. You hear the continuous clinking of cutlery, plates drying, then a harmonic wave which builds until the kitchen submerges with a sense of bereavement.

Sitting at a mixing desk in his Swingtime studio in Greenwich, South London, with his high forehead and preoccupied manner punctuated by sudden laughs, Herbert describes the genesis of the track. "At the beginning you hear me saying, 'Right, what ingredients have we got? Beans, bacon, eggs'. From start to finish we make breakfast. What you hear is us laying out the plate. There's one point where you hear me cutting open the bacon, that's really loud. The toast is going *tiktikertikertiker*. We start frying things, that's when you hear *shsshhhhurrur*. Then we get round to eating it and there's a loud noise, that's me spreading butter on toast. I picked that one sound, used that as one of the percussion sounds, picked out a couple of other nice sounds and layered them through. From start to finish the whole process is in real time. There's no edits. From walking into the kitchen to taking it out and eating it — that's how long it takes, which is not very long, about 11 minutes. The sadness comes from the fact that it's two people making breakfast and not speaking and eating it. It ends up being like one of those relationships where you've come to the point where there's nothing left to say. About two years later I added these violin parts and they came out quite sad."

house rules

Matt Herbert's architectronics work from a domestic blueprint to produce a House music alive with the concrète sounds and spirit of its occupants. Words: Kodwo Eshun. Photography: Eva Vermandel

Herbert has spent 1999 co-composing the soundtrack for the rave film *Human Traffic* with producer Robert Mello, studying jazz piano, touring both the Herbert experience and the audiovisual event The Sight Of Sound live throughout the UK. Mid-year, he and his collaborators, fortysomething pianist Phil Parnell and San Franciscan singer Dani Siciliano, performed at La Fondation Cartier, the incredible glass building designed by French architect Jean Nouvel. Four songs from the five European Herbert shows make up his new four track EP.

Since 1994, when he emerged via Global Communication's Universal Language label, Herbert has worked under several personae— RadioBoy, Wishmountain, Dr Rockit, Herbert — each highlighting a different facet of his peculiarly manic energy. Ostensibly, his 1999 work sounds like a step back from the mid-90s, when under the personae of Wishmountain or RadioBoy, his shows were famous for real-time sampladelia, recording and composing and eating dishes prepared onstage. According to Matt, a Herbert show is "more music based", while a RadioBoy gig is "more experimental, much more about sounds".

But for my money, it's the reverse. Herbert's updated concrete aesthetic reaches its

In the house: Matt Herbert

peak in his underrated House music productions, which integrate low end and dynamic syncopation with a sampling approach usually restricted to the most austere IDM. But instead of an intimidating dysfunktionality, there's a swing that speaks to your hips, puts a skip in your step and a glide in your slide. Herbert samples the minutiae of his world, MiniDiscing the everyday audioevents of his life, then extracting samples and arranging tracks from them.

"When you sample," he explains, moving piles of DATs aside, "you take a little snapshot, you're taking an atmosphere, you're taking a temperature, you're taking memory and you're building up a photo album." Where the postwar concrete pioneers such as Schaeffer, Henry and Ferrari wanted to defamiliarise sound by stripping away its habitual associations, Herbert retains and builds on them. "I was much more into the explicitness. I wanted to know what those sounds were, where they were recorded, what the weather was like the day they were recorded." His sampladelia is defamiliarising but anti-concrete: it doesn't dissolve memory, it plays with it as an inevitable component of the sample.

Herbert's 1996 Dr Rockit album *The Music Of Sound* defined a distinctly unmetropolitan mood, its whimsical attitude summed up in the Dr Rockit logo: the English eccentric perched on his lo-tech engine, Catherine-wheeling across the sky. Wishmountain's initial appeal was equally playful — epitomised by short attention span TV collages like "Grand Prix" assembled from murmured commentary, or "Theme From Wishmountain", the quaint theme tune for an imaginary *Mr Benn* style children's TV cartoon.

But in late 95, Wishmountain moved into intensively emotive time-space with the 14 minute "Rose", a one-sided single dedicated to Herbert's mother's passing. He had talked about sampling as "a living obituary", with its fathomless surging bass, crowd noise-surf subsidence, harmonic waves of bereavement welling and subsiding, and ping pong percussion played across the abyssal depths, "Rose" was the record which epitomised all his ideas of "immortalising your loved ones in music", incarnating them in psycho affective time-space.

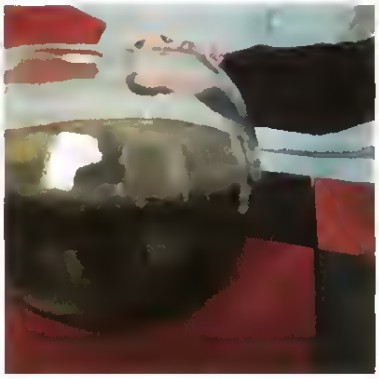
"It's got this weird weepy quality. I came back and made some noises" — he breaks off to gargle — "and that's what all these percussion noises are. There's a little girl that runs down the street, and there's this amazing bit where her footsteps go in triplets and the music kicks in, it's really subtle. There's the sounds of taking photos — *shhrwhirr* — of the street at the time." Herbert is bringing a triple logic into play here. Fascinating in itself, every tone compels you to guess, usually wrongly, at its source, then follow the narrative of its often swift production process.

Like many 90s producers, from DJ Shadow to Adam F to Peanut Butter Wolf, Matthew Herbert's musical background was *in*credible rather than credible, far from the subcultural routes of B-boyhood or raving. "Whilst you were out thinking you were listening to the best House music, I was indoors doing choir practice, every lunchtime playing double bass in the school orchestra. I was about 11 when I heard Steve Reich's *Come Out*. That made a big impression."

Reich's minimally additive phase patterns, so useful for today's producers, stayed with Herbert, though the ideas in them didn't surface until after "Rose", when he killed off his previous alter-ego on the Antiphon album *Wishmountain Is Dead*, and began producing House tracks for new UK labels like Phono and Classic.

Herbert's initial House 12"s, titled *Parts 1-4* and compiled with new tracks on the *1000lb* album, were very much in the mix with the mid-90s turn towards the spatialised House of Two Lone Swordsmen, Derrick Carter, Deep Dish, Etienne De Crecy and Philippe Zdar's Motorbass and Super Discount projects. It wasn't until December 96 that Herbert pulled away from the pack. That month, a green labelled 10" single titled "Going Round" quietly emerged, announcing an ongoing collaboration with Dani Siciliano and the launch of the Phonography, Antiphon and Lowlife labels, which cluster together under the umbrella of Remote Analogue Modular Systems (RAMS).

Introspective yet immediately memorable, "Going Round" was simultaneously gossamer delicate and massively bass heavy, drawing you into an utterly beguiling world of hushed intimacy and surging pulse. Siciliano's self absorbed ode to rotation invited you to listen to yourself listening: *"I don't know what I'm hearing/I don't know what I'm feeling/All I know is you got me going round."* Her presence interiorised the House song so you were listening into her broadcast thoughts, hearing a woman thinking quietly aloud. "When I hear that song now," Herbert says, "I hear the room in Forest Hill, the old doctor's surgery where it was written, with those weird leaded windows and you looked out and you just saw these bizarre apple trees and pear trees."



Rhythmically, "Going Round" was compelling. Its bright, light attack, more like stainless steel cutlery than sticks or brushes, doubled and tripled with an insouciant time, felt catchy and elusive all at once. At one stroke, its intricate simplicity turned Herbert into a major producer. "I'm not into excess. If you've got a drumbeat, what's the one thing that you need to make it swing? There's a point where you can put a second snare" — he makes a double snare sound — "if you can get away with just putting one, then do it. That's why my studio's called Swingtime, I try and get that swing in everything."

In mid-1997, three mixes of "Going Round", each more deliquescent than the next, were pressed as a 7" but released on 12" vinyl. On the "Hmmmix", Siciliano becomes an evanescent loop of exhalation. Early 98 saw the four song EP *So Now* with the standout title song and "I Hadn't Known (I Only Heard)", both of which showcased Herbert's vocal science. Siciliano's vocalism on "So Now", *"You took me by surprise, you took me in disguise, you took me with your hands away"*, is processed until it shudders and shivers. In "I Hadn't Known (I Only Heard)" a fragile tenderness is evoked through her voice deliquescing into phonemes that fade in and out of range. Syntactical sequence breaks down into words that lose their shape, revert to blurts and sighs, trade places with onomatopoeic tones. Each word emerges from a different atmospheric volume. Hisses are repeated until they become hooks, air levels depress and compress into pressurised mnemonics you hum along with.

"Some of that might be me," Herbert smiles, "all those noises" — he smacks his lips and sighs — "sort of like grunts and groans and wheezes and puffs. I like this idea of someone else going, *"But — but what about my —"*, these sounds that intrude edgeways into the song blurting and interrupting. It could be Dani as well. A lot of that stuff is left in as mistakes. I write leaving myself open to as many mistakes as possible. I'll

take one of these accidents and then orchestrate it, then recreate that accident many times throughout the whole track, base the whole track around that one accident."

Like James Brown's funk theorem, the 90s House producer treats every tone as a rhythm but goes on to tune them into texturhythms, into rhythmelodies which crossweave into honeycombs of minimal maximality. "That's the really great thing about House music — really good musical percussion that's quite tuned. I do spend a lot of time tuning percussion sounds so that they fit with the music." The recurring patterns of his songs evolve from these rhythmelodies. "Maybe the words suggest a melody because the words are in rhythm, maybe you come up with a phrase, it's a slow process, listening, listening, listening."

With a Herbert production, such as his sumptuously warm "Tasteful Dub" of Moloko's "Sing It Back", you can have it all — danceability coexisting with sampladelic magic, emphatic bottom end with irresistible swing, skank with sway, an inclusive aesthetic disproving the idea that experimental is by definition difficult. "In [the Moloko] mix I snipped it all up so that it's *"When you are ready I will surrender tastefully falling away"* [in the original] she says *"peacefully"*, but I put a *"t"* from somewhere else, that's what I like about lyrics as well, changing all the meanings by joining together two phrases."

Played at home, it's the lead bass on a Herbert record, lithe and limber, that strikes you. Played on club PAs, that same track floors you with its *thuddd*, the insistent monotony of its bottom end which spreads warmth while concussing you with what Andrea Parker called melodious thunk.

Like the Washington DJ producers Deep Dish and New Yorker Danny Tenaglia, Herbert is part of a generation of House producers indelibly marked by Basic Channel's bass impact, subtracted skank and tone sculpturing. In particular, dub mixes by Mood II Swing, the brilliant New York duo of John Ciafone and Lem Springsteen, pioneered a new bassic brutalism for House. "Mood II Swing was quite dark, they had real bottom end thump, and that's one thing Americans have always done best. That's so important in House music, those twisted vocals, the tempo as well." For an example of how traumatising 90s House can get, check John Ciafone's ultra-forbidding industrial "TickTock" (1996) in his solo Chia Pet guise, remixed by RadioBoy into punishing extremes. "Music gets interesting when it starts to be little tormented," Herbert muses.

Herbert's microworld of imperfections and ambushes, hisses, sighs and atmospheric variations, depends on glitches and errors. But where post-Farmers Manual electronica shreds the ear, this art of the accident caresses and grooves, gets you on the good foot. Your ears are constantly homing in on events, searching for worlds hiding out inside the song. "There's a computer software that, once you've got a vocal track, will go through and *remove* all those noises, all the little glitches in the background and the headphone leakage," he winces, "and I thought that sounds like a horrific prospect. Remove the accidents, remove the humanity."

The same wincing expression appears as he talks about Monsanto, the Paddington train crash, how inhuman these corporate structures are. Pick out the distributed letters of the sleeve for *Around The House* and they spell "Bedtime Reading. Hidden Agendas. John Pilger", he also admires the writings of Noam Chomsky. He worries about the politics of record companies more than his music. "You grow up trusting in things like the BBC and then you find out that's all wrong, you begin to hear the institutional, ingrained prejudice of it. There really is a capitalist machine taking everything to its logical extremity, and it's getting worse on a daily basis. You think of a cartoon of a great big monstrous machine with America at the helm and Britain stoking the flames and a little shrinking globe going 'Help!' A company like Monsanto, they're causing cancer and they're curing it and both halves of that industry are worth up to about a billion dollars a year."

He frowns. "It's such a privilege to be making music. Music is there to be shared, it's not a gift that some people have and other people don't, yours to buy at £9.99." A disgusted look takes hold of him. "When you listen to music, you're almost listening for the person breathing, you're just looking for those little indications, the personality." □ The Last Beat *EP and the* Tick Tock *EP with remixes by RadioBoy and Herbert are both out now on Phonography.* Herbert Meets Motorbass/Herbert Meets Them Rednail Kidz *is out now on RAMS International*

Since Vietnam and *Apocalypse Now*, the **helicopter**'s scything rotor action has been bound up wi
through the music of Cabaret Voltaire, Plastikman and Ice T, the chopper is transformed into a mo

death from above

"We're in this space-music thing and we're talking about the war and the human being–lawnmower and everything, and the Chicago police helicopters started buzzing us. They were coming down on top of us, and the helicopter sound fit in with what I was playing on guitar. 'Yeah, it's perfect, man, waaaaahhhhh!'"
— Wayne Kramer on The MC5's performance in Lincoln Park during the National Democratic Convention, Chicago, August 1968

The idea for Karlheinz Stockhausen's *Helikopter-Streichquartett*, an ambitious work for string quartet and four helicopters, first came to him in his sleep "It was a dream," he explained to a Reuters correspondent at the time of the piece's world premiere above Amsterdam in June 1995. "I was above the helicopters *in* the air. I cannot recall that I had a body, but I could see the four players in the four helicopters. See them playing and hear them." Written between 1992–93, *Helikopter-Streichquartett* requires two violinists, one violist and one cellist to perform in precise synchronisation while each is being transported aboard their own helicopter. External microphones add the sound of beating rotor blades to the final mix, as the four machines rise and descend, bank and circle during the piece's approximate 28 minute duration. Stockhausen describes the performance as "a window onto our consciousness. . . for the first time there exists a musical composition *in* which the performers do not need any longer to be in the same space: they could be on four different planets and perform perfectly synchronously, down to the tenth of a second". From the first Futurist noise manifestos onwards, engines and propellers have always had a special place in 20th century music, jarring and shaking up acoustic space. More than a few modernist composers have allowed themselves to be photographed at some world fair or exhibition, sitting at the controls of a replica aeroplane. The helicopter came later. Almost 50 years separate the *Helikopter-Streichquartett* from the first commercial prototype. In a light-hearted moment of prescience, however, a snapshot was taken *in* Königswater of a smiling group of individuals gathered around the painted fuselage of a cardboard helicopter during the summer of 1964. Among those present were Carolyn Brown, Merce Cunningham, John Cage, David Tudor and, in the middle of the front row, Karlheinz Stockhausen.

US airlift

Arriving just too late for World War Two, but way too early to be on the leading edge of 50s technology, the first production helicopter was awarded a commercial licence on 8 March 1946. With its twinblade teetering

ıe sound of windmill guitars, Woodstock and Wagner. Roaring like an apocalyptic outrider ›enign presence in Stockhausen's *Helikopter-Streichquartett*. Words: Ken Hollings

The Ride of the Valkyries, Vietnam-style

rotor, stabilising bar and distinctive bubble cockpit, the Bell 47 was the very pattern of what a helicopter should be. Unlike the jets and rockets then being put through their paces at White Plains, the US military test site in New Mexico, the humble Bell 47 could trace its origins back to an old Chrysler garage in Gardenville, New York. A lightweight muscle machine capable of heaving itself straight up into the air, the Bell 47 was never destined to tilt against the wide blue of the horizon. Those blades weren't created for work in deep space. No alien ever stepped down from a copter's open hatch, not even in *The Jetsons*. Forget about altitude, just get the job done. It sold in huge quantities to the US Army.

Like that other great post-war phenomenon, the electric guitar, the helicopter exists as a series of variations on a basic generic model. Move the pick-ups around, change the body or the arrangement of the machine heads: hey, it's still an electric guitar. In 1956, the prototype for the Bell HU-1A was rolled out. Three years later, the Army took delivery of its first 'Hueys'. A demonic dragonfly, the Bell Huey was destined to hover over many a potential combat zone, ready for anything. Round about the same time, the twin-engined Boeing-Vertol CH46 was also coming off the assembly line; it was capable of lugging both heavy calibre machine guns and incumbent presidents around the roughest terrains.

After hosting a successful inaugural party for John F Kennedy in 1961, Frank Sinatra had been busy preparing his Palm Springs home for a presidential visit. Confident that his spread would soon become the West Coast White House, Frankie added Secret Service accommodation, 25 extra phone lines and a helicopter landing site. Unfortunately, with Sinatra's mobster pal Sam Giancana under FBI investigation at the behest of Attorney General Bobby Kennedy, the President was obliged to make other arrangements. Thrown into a frenzy by the news, Sinatra took a sledgehammer and smashed the tarmac on his new heliport. Man, that's gotta hurt. The first armed Hueys went into action in Vietnam in 1962.

Air strikes

On 2 November 1963, South Vietnam's President Diem was assassinated in the back of a motor vehicle. Less than three weeks later, JFK died in Dallas in similar circumstances. Military helicopters, like the Huey and the Boeing CH-47 Chinook, came to represent a state of impossible containment in South East Asia: the lowest level at which American forces could still maintain control of the terrain. The ground, treacherously overgrown with jungle or awash with rice fields, was always in play. The areas below the treeline belonged to Charlie, above to the choppers. 'The

Hendrix at Woodstock

hundreds of helicopters I'd flown in," Michael Herr wrote in *Dispatches*, "began to draw together until they'd formed a collective meta-chopper, and in my mind it was the sexiest thing going – sweat cooling and warming up again, cassette rock 'n' roll in one ear and door-gunfire in the other."

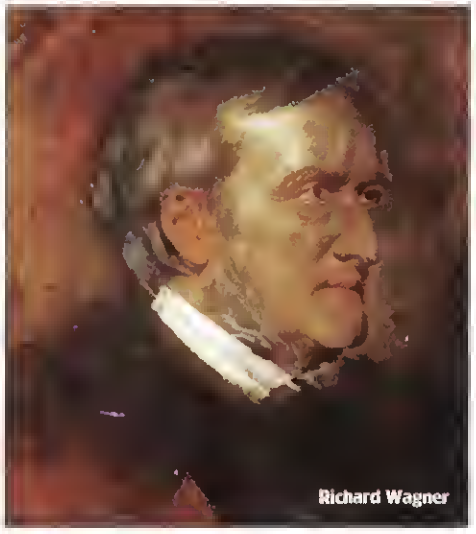
Except no one back in Rock City found the helicopter particularly sexy. It remained a klunky, mechanical workhorse strictly for the use of coastguards, forest rangers and traffic cops. Hipsters had little time for such a dowdy representative of the Man. The helicopter's sole contribution to cool was as a lowly recording angel, filming aerial shots of The Beatles at carefree play upon some wide expanse of Swinging London, while America began its air strikes against North Vietnam. Although the helicopter helped keep Richard Lester's cameras in restless motion, it still had no real presence in pop culture. You couldn't even get the damned word to scan or rhyme. The closest anyone got was Benny Hill on "Gypsy Rock", a steamy ballad of sexual betrayal in which a man sets out by land and sea to catch his lover in the arms of another, *"and then by hell 'e copped 'er'*. Outrageous.

Elvis Presley played a professional whirlybird pilot in 1966's *Paradise Hawaiian Style*, opposite a pack of performing dogs and actress Irene Tsu, who went on to ensare a Viet Cong general in John Wayne's pro-Nam propaganda fest, *The Green Berets*.

While the choppers continued to circle, the fun power politics of the 60s met up with the radical protest movement of the college campus, opposed to America's presence in Vietnam, at vast outdoor gatherings. As the playing fields once occupied by The Beatles and The Monkees gradually filled up with hippies, the helicopter's eye in the sky helped observe their huddled presence, both for the police and the media. Copters roared overhead throughout Woodstock, where Hendrix launched his pyrotechnic assault upon the "Star Spangled Banner", complete with rockets, jets and screams. "You can leave if you want to. We're just jamming." In Vietnam the Bell 209 Cobra, the first dedicated attack helicopter, had gone sweeping into action with its chin-mounted multi-barrel minigun and rocket launchers. The Cobra had nothing to do with high-altitude bombing or long-range strafing that suddenly appeared out of the bright blue yonder. It was all about letting the suckers know you were there. Let's rock.

However, doorgunners listening to Hendrix while raining death down on peasant villages didn't really figure much in the rhetoric of the anti-war movement. Did "Purple Haze" mean the same thing when listened to by American soldiers on their tour of duty? Trapped in a hell of unknowing, grunts dug The Grateful Dead for their name alone. Far easier to protest US imperialism and its high-powered technological clout in the form of disputed air attacks upon Hanoi, Laos and Cambodia. It lifted the debate to a higher level.

The controlled glide and heavenly arc of an aeroplane in flight was something worth fighting over. It appealed to a certain state of mind: stoned free. Released in the


Richard Wagner

same year as Michael Wadleigh's *Woodstock*, Michelangelo Antonioni's *Zabriskie Point* offered a [illegible] portrait of America's radical youth in which a disaffected revolutionary, played by Mark Flechette, steals a private plane and heads out over California's Death Valley. There is a moment of hazy transcendence as the plane first rises into the sky, accompanied by the sublime, floating guitar lines of The Grateful Dead's "Dark Star". Imagine the same scene filled with the hydraulic judderings of a Bell Huey. It would never happen, man.

After the Fall

In January 1973, Elvis arrived in Honolulu aboard a Bell 206 JetRanger helicopter, favoured by the police and the military for its outstanding surveillance capabilities, to present his live satellite concert, *Aloha From Hawaii*. Two months later, the last uniformed US troops pulled out of South Vietnam, leaving only civilian, intelligence agency and embassy personnel behind them.

With the fall of Saigon in 1975, amid desperate scenes of hurried evacuation, the final chopper out became an icon for the changing political climate. The flight path from *Zabriskie Point*, with its radical underground soundtrack, to the rock star's private airstrip was a depressingly short one. Expansionism now began at home. Pink Floyd released *Wish You Were Here*, the latest instalment in their protracted sulk with fame and success. Having originally contributed to the *Zabriskie Point* soundtrack, they had now concentrated upon their VCS3 synths in a mood of "listlessness and angst" at Abbey Road, producing "Welcome To The Machine", whose opening industrial vibrations convey the heavy menace of a hovering chopper. As an expression of the cultural manufacturing process of which Pink Floyd had increasingly come to see themselves as the victimised by-products, it was enough.

"The rotor-thud of a helicopter," Michael Herr wrote, "the one sound I know that is both sharp and dull at the same time."

While the children of the revolution travelled around by Lear Jet, Abba were uncool enough to show themselves grouped around a helicopter for the cover of their 1976 LP, *Arrival*. Gazing at their antiseptic white jumpsuits and their stern unsmiling faces, photographed beneath rolling apocalyptic skies, it's hard to tell whether Abba are the outriders of an imminent alien invasion or chemical warfare technicians come to inspect their work. Either way, you'd never guess this was the record with "Dancing Queen" on it. There were horrors blowing in on the steel wind that Pink Floyd couldn't even guess at. As if in response to Abba's call for total extermination, George Romero's *Dawn Of The Dead*, the sequel to his 1968 Vietnam allegory *Night Of The Living Dead*, followed four survivors in a TV station helicopter across a dehumanised wilderness filled with zombies and crazed paramilitaries out on a turkey shoot. Italian Prog rockers Goblin supplied a creepy baroque soundtrack to the nightmarish aerial footage. Antonioni was never this good.

Search and destroy

When Francis Ford Coppola slowed down a Bell Huey's spinning rotor blades at the start of *Apocalypse Now* to match the speed of a ceiling fan in a Saigon hotel room, a radical shift in sound took place. After he mixed in the opening guitar run to The Doors' "The End", his audience shifted too. Following *Zabriskie Point* and *Dawn Of The Dead*, this was another voyage across a blighted landscape, undertaken this time by intelligence agent Willard on a secret mission to kill a rogue Green Beret colonel. The journey might have begun and ended by boat, but it was the heavy prop-wash of the army helicopters roaring overhead that gave *Apocalypse Now* its deepest resonance, blasting out over Dolby's huge new six-channel system.

However, it was Air Mobile's spectacular dawn raid upon a suspected VC village that became the film's trippy virtuoso high point. Featuring a squadron of armed Hueys coming in low over the river's early morning haze, it made great acoustic use of the music playing at full volume over their hull-mounted loudspeakers. "Music?" Willard asks, surprised. "Wagner," Lieutenant Colonel Kilgore replies. "My boys

PHOTO OF JIMI HENDRIX: D LEVINE/REDFERNS

love it Scares the hell out of the 'Slopes' " The relentless full frontal assault of "Ride Of The Valkyries" is soon augmented by the humungous rattle of tracers, rockets and belt-fed ammunition Nietzsche, who once wrote that a culture should be judged by its ability to win a war, would have loved it too This sure as hell wasn't "Dark Star", even if The Dead's drummers Mickey Hart and Bill Kreutzmann, working as The Rhythm Devils, contributed to the film's soundtrack

Apocalypse Now might have been set in Vietnam, but its audience lay elsewhere Those who had no affinities with, or vested interest in, the tired cultural rhetoric of the late 60s saw the film's sonic attack as the jagged-edged expression of a post-punk aesthetic The deep bass throb of those scything rotor blades, with their promise of violent annihilation and moral terror, appealed to an emergent mood of baleful puritanism It spoke of a darkly vibrating world freed of banal details *Apocalypse Now* also gave the post-punk imagination a new icon to conjure with the Bell Huey was the movie s true star, an airborne version of Manson's dune buggy battalion, still searching for salvation down in Death Valley while the rock tycoons of the love generation soared overhead in their private jets

By 1980, Industrial progenitors Throbbing Gristle were including "The World Is A War Film" in their raging freeform electronic performances Capable of both parodying and extending art rock's indulgences, TG offered a savagely psychedelic trip into the pulsating heart of darkness More than just amplified vibrations in space, sound itself was to become a destructive element into which the audience was expected to submerge itself As the sonic range of studio and keyboard technology continued to expand, extremes commensurate with the highs and lows of a helicopter's rhythmic thrashing were more attainable John Carpenter's soundtrack to *Escape From New York*, his 1981 study of urban collapse and armed colonisation of city space, pitched the twittering of police helicopters against sustained blocks of synthesizer tones and sequenced rhythms composed with programmer Alan Howarth

Some of these same effects turned up on *Force The Hand Of Chance* the first album, released in 1983, by Psychic TV The track "No Go Go" truly buzzed with doomladen meditations on helicopters and power An *Apocalypse Now* in miniature, this was four minutes of pared-back martial rhythms, lazy West Coast guitar, sonic booms and the heaviest rotor tremors yet The entire track hangs, poised malevolently in the air, waiting to strike 'Death From Above was the message scrawled on the underside of one of the attacking helicopters in Coppola's film PTV had reconfigured those words into a bleak alchemical formula for total destruction 'As above, so below' Part insect part UFO, the helicopter on ' No Go Go" signalled the Apocalypse on Earth It looked like Abba had been right all along

Prop wash and street trash

"Some one some time cracks down," Steve Mallinder breathed urgently on Cabaret Voltaire s mantra of surveillance and control, "Crackdown" The accompanying video shows grainy slow-motion footage of a riot in progress Cops swing nightsticks Tear gas disperses, one frame at a time A police helicopter circles overhead, blades turning Cabaret Voltaire helped expand Psychic TV's paramilitary spiritual community, each in its own way

illustrating how the frontiers of the State passed through the interior of our consciousness as well as our cities

The 1983 urban hardware fantasy *Blue Thunder* concerned the struggle between the LAPD and the army over a monster helicopter equipped with the latest in surveillance and pacification technology The chopper's scanners and monitors revealed the futuristic psychedelia of LA at night, streaming with violent undercurrents Having inspired a TV series, its liberal agenda was promptly scrapped 'Let s clean up the trash' became the new edict The Bell OH-58D Kiowa Warrior came on the market Heavily armed, it boasted high magnification TV cameras, autofocusing infrared thermal imaging, laser range finder and automatic target tracking

From the mid- to late 1980s, the chopper quickly became assimilated into cyberpunk, appearing in the writings of William Gibson and Bruce Sterling as a city prowler, policing a state of protracted social collapse If mirror shades represented the gleaming technological dazzle behind which one could hide, the helicopter became the means by which urban space was invaded, occupied and

Death from above in *Apocalypse Now*

PHOTO RONALD GRANT ARCHIVE

controlled The sound of thrashing rotor blades became a form of sonic terrorism It remained, however a tough subject to articulate over a repetitive beat The jailbreak scenario of Public Enemy's 19BB track "Black Steel In The Hour Of Chaos" saw Chuck D achieve the seemingly impossible, outdoing Benny Hill with the lines *"Got a woman CO to call me a 'copter/She tried to get away and I popped her'*

More adept at handling narrative details, LA rap veteran Ice T brought a cinematic sweep to the themes of evasion and control His 1991 album OG *Original Gangster*, opened with a dense sound collage, "Home Of The Bodybag", in which choppy, sheet metal guitars are blended with the slow steady traverse of a helicopter across the speakers Gunfire, police sirens and bites from previous Ice T raps complete the picture of LA as a vast combat zone under constant and open surveillance From above

Towers open fire

One of the least pleasant aspects of life in America these days,' William Gibson commented in 1993, "is the militarisation of city life The helicopters are constantly overhead ' FBI Chinooks were seen circling over the burning compound in Waco Texas, where failed rock messiah David Koresh had yet to complete his commentary on the Apocalypse Media copters fanned the flames of the LA riots, while OJ Simpson s Bronco was pursued in a cop show parody of rap's jailbreak motif After the video game destruction of the Gulf War, noisy shoot 'em ups such as Desert Strike placed you at the controls of an Apache attack helicopter, loaded down with Sidewinders, Stingers and Hellfire missiles

"Hey kids, want a soundtrack that's gonna make you feel tense?" Timothy Leary asked at the start of 'Gilacopter" on The Revolting Cocks' 1994 album *Linger Ficken' Good & Other Barnyard Oddities* *"Looking for another rock n roll record that'll make you feel like a victim?"* In the background helicopters swing backwards and forwards over an agitated mix of sirens and gunfire while Leary urges his listeners to turn down the source of all this anxiety and tension *"Is the Gilacopter a machine for pleasure a love machine?'* Leary gently asks while The Cocks' pounding synthetic percussion makes merry nonsense of everything he's saying

The good doctor got the connection about right, however Since the late 19BOs, 'FX Helicopter pre-sets had been turning up on Roland Yamaha and Korg keyboards The terrifying bass strobing of Aphex Twin's "Didgeridoo" found its echo in Ambient's blissed-out effects Dr Atomic's "Schudelfloss" used the 'copter's audio range of high and low tones to create an illusion of the sky opening above the listener "Sheesha" by Banco De Gaia went for the full dub apocalypse, mixing both slow and normal speed rotors with Carl Sagan's musings about a green cosmos and an urgent news report on the Cuban missile crisis The dry husking of the air that can be heard on Plastikman's "Helikopter" from his 1993 debut album *Sheet One*, conceals a silent, lurking presence an intense and extended flickering of motion that builds to menacing, watchful stasis We ain't going nowhere, and neither are you The live recording of ascending helicopters that ends Paul Schutze's "Topology Of A Phantom City", from his 1992 album *New Maps Of Hell*, suggests an even more desolate image on a sure course for safety, the choppers appear to leave the listener stranded in the electronic jungle below By comparison, the premiere of Stockhausen's *Helikopter-Streichquartett* projects the cheery optimism of a 60s art happening Glissandos up and down the scale follow the helicopters' movements in the air, while some busy bowing conveys the repetitive chugging of the blades at work The shuddering of the choppers in flight also augments the quartet's performance, which is relayed to the audience via TV monitors and loudspeakers

Meanwhile Richard Wagner, Nietszche's former friend and Stockhausen s old labelmate, had his Greatest Hits repackaged by Deutsche Grammophon as *Twilight Of The Gods*, complete with smouldering cover art depicting a squadron of Hueys swooping in to attack. From a mechanised workhorse to an outrider of Armageddon in less than 50 years the helicopter has become a powerful signal feeding back on itself "Ride Of The Valkyries" is now subtitled "Theme From *Apocalypse Now*" Kilgore's ghostly laughter can be heard echoing across the burning straw roofs of the peasant village at daybreak So close has the connection become that two recent children s movies, Disney's *A Bug's Life* and Joe Dante's *Small Soldiers*, both feature miniaturised, computer-animated parodies of Coppola s original dawn raid In each case, it's the comic recasting of Wagner's music that prompts the initial moment of recognition You just know what's coming next.

America's patriots have recently been forced to confront their own personal Gotterdammerung however, in the form of the legendary black helicopters, thought to contain UN troops brought in by the Federal government to commit genocide against the American people Carl Klang, whose songs provide a soundtrack for the militia movement in the United States, detailed the phenomenon with "Evil, Filthy, Rotten Conspiracy" on his 1995 release *America America Now have you seen the flying saucers/Or some of them black helicopters/Flying down over my backyard recently?"* Klang sings in hushed tones *'Seen them foreign troops in ninja suits/Leaving imprints of their combat boots?"* Linked to cattle mutilations and alien abductions, the unmarked black helicopters have developed a powerful mythic presence of their own They even turn up in videos for Robbie Williams and Oasis, disgorging in the latter's case nothing more sinister than a bunch of disturbingly passive fans

As US Apaches continue to police Kosovo under Nato control, it's worth noting that the helicopter's ascendancy as an American instrument for surveillance and control may be drawing to a close The shadows started falling in Mogadishu, during the closing moments of Operation Restore Hope A bunch of Somalians brought down an army chopper with automatic weapons, then dragged its crew through the streets for the news cameras of the world to film The fear of such events ever happening again led to the creation of the Full Spectrum Dominance programme, designed to develop a new generation of spy planes America's ultimate secret agent is now a powerful, radar-evasive high-flyer designed to observe an entire battlefield in detail It's called Dark Star

Chopperholics: Cabaret Voltaire (below) and Plastikman

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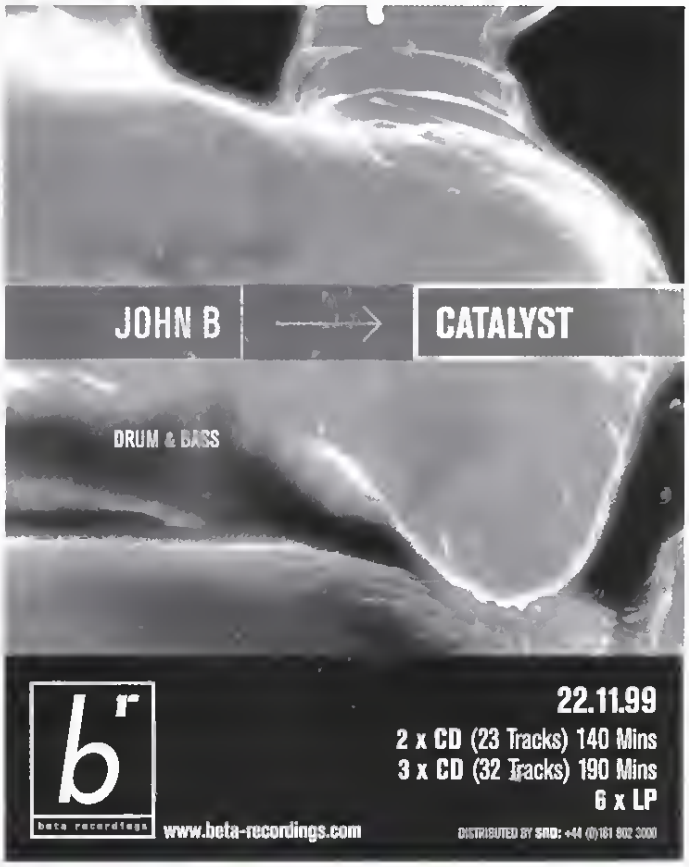

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In the mid-70s, when **Mark Perry** started the first punk fanzine *Sniffin' Glue* and formed the group Alternative TV, he regarded them both as being part of rock's experimental outsider traditions. His audiences, however, saw it differently. Words: Ben Watson. Photography: Wandy

the missionary's position

"History," said Walter Benjamin, "is written by the victors." And that is certainly true of punk rock. Read Jon Savage's *England's Dreaming* and you'd think punk revolved around a crew of glamorous Sex Pistols fans from Bromley who became household names by forming rock groups and making films — and then converted their fame into 80s careers in pop, journalism and the record industry, defining how the heady days of 1977 went down in history. Greil Marcus's *Lipstick Traces* attempted to explicate punk politics, but got lost in a romantic archaeology of the music's continental antecedents. Most disappointingly, there has been no book on punk that *feels* like it did: the ruction, the relief, the toppling of celebrity/media oppression and bullshit, the necessary whiff of scorch and destruction. Instead, punk's defining proletarian nihilism, its ferocity and laughter, has been cautersed, bandaged in a web of self-serving myth.

The writer Mark Sinker holds that punk created three types of listener: those whose ideas were formed before it, those whose ideas were changed by it, and those whose ideas were formed after it — and none of these three types can communicate with each other. But there is a chill at the heart of this aphorism. It suggests that we, the audience, can never attain an overview of the music industry (whose corporate merger and growth, meanwhile, has been seamless, unbroken by any hiccup), and that active involvement must imply fractional thinking and subjectivist blinkers.

Attention to the productive element in the process — that is, the musicians — might untangle the fratricidal clash of Sinker's ignorant armies. However, publishers of music books also weigh up the sales potential of famous names: far from illuminating the inner dynamics of punk, the slew of books that have appeared since have further backwritten the success of the 80s victors. In this context, it was intriguing to hear that Mark Perry — the former editor of *Sniffin' Glue*, the first punk fanzine — had reconvened Alternative TV. Dormant for much of the 80s and early 90s, ATV is rarely mentioned today (it doesn't make the index of *England's Dreaming*), yet "Love Lies Limp", "How Much Longer" and "Action Time Vision" are towering punk classics, whose ferocious existential naivety seizes on R&B and reggae and uses them for its own ends. The tone of Perry's South London accent is so accusatory, so bilious, it refuses to be reduced to a novelty item. The barbs still catch, the beats still punch.

ATV proved as much by delivering a raw and righteous set last year at the Dublin Castle (North London's notorious 'rock 'n' roll toilet') during which music and attitude were unbowed — spiky, intact. More recently, ATV performed a benefit for Mad Pride, the Hackney-based anarcho squad fighting for the rights of psychiatric patients. The group provided impromptu backing for two voluble lunatics, one of whom — Jim MacDougall — performed an unsettlingly accurate rerun of Johnny Rotten's act with The Sex Pistols (*"My dementia merely reflects the social madness your sanity perpetuates"*). ATV's ability to ride risk and event was palpable, bringing some of the music — or 'organised chaos' — into the orbit of free improvisation.

Mark Perry found himself in the midst of punk because he was a 70s rock fanatic, a moshpit headbanger (to use two convenient anachronisms). As he puts it, he was the right person in the right place at the right time. Born in Deptford, South East

Right: Mark Perry, 1977

PHOTO, FAR RIGHT: BARRY PLUMMER

London in 1957, his father was an ex-docker working as a caretaker for Lewisham Council; his mother worked in catering. Rock music was Mark's particular enthusiasm. Aged ten, he'd imitate Mick Jagger at Christmas parties. In his early teens, the older brother of his schoolfriend, Steve Micalef, roadied for The Pink Fairies, the missing link between The Pretty Things and Hawkwind, so Mark attended their gigs — "weird!" (Micalef would later work on *Sniffin' Glue* alongside another of Perry's schoolfriends, Danny Baker.) Mark distinguishes himself from the Bromley Contingent, the Bowie and Roxy Music fans who latched onto The Sex Pistols and dominate *England's Dreaming*.

"They'd come into it because they thought, 'What's got coloured hair?'," he says. "They were looking for things that were fashionable, those kind of people. They all got into it because they saw themselves as likeminded. But I was into music. I didn't go to gigs or clubs to pose around. Every gig I went to I had to be at the front; on the seats for Dr Feelgood at the Hammersmith Odeon, I'd be up at the stage for Eddie And The Hot Rods. I'd be one of those hanging off the monitors. I was really into the music."

The first issue of *Sniffin' Glue* appeared in the summer of 1976, xeroxed and stapled in a print run of 200 copies. Inspired by American underground fanzines and *NME* journalists such as Charles Shaar Murray, Mick Farren and Nick Kent (who inadvertently introduced Perry to punk via a 1976 *NME* review of The Ramones' first album), that first issue covered US groups, including The Ramones, The Flamin' Groovies and Blue Oyster Cult (as Mark explains it, "It was nothing to do with The Pistols; they might as well have not existed"). A rival zine edited by Paul Morley — *Out There* — featured Patti Smith, The Stranglers, The Ramones and The Sex Pistols. The p-word was in use, but as yet uncoined as a generic description, so *Out There* called the new music 'S' rock (slogan: 'aggression through repression'). However, Morley's zine also included essays on free improv drummer John Stevens, Eno's Obscure album series and Bob Dylan. It was a prescient mix, but at the time *Sniffin' Glue*'s exclusive focus on rock 'n' roll conveyed a more appropriate taste of teen apocalyse. That first issue led to an invitation for Perry to travel with Eddie And The Hot Rods to a Hastings gig. Once inside the van, Mark met *Melody Maker* journalist Caroline Coon, who told him about The Sex Pistols and The Clash. "A week after that I saw The Pistols at the 100 Club, I went with Caroline Coon, and I couldn't believe this band! They were breaking all the rules that had been around for years. It's great rock 'n' roll music, they look weird and they're arrogant bastards. From then on, it was 'Forget about the Americans, there's something happening here now'."

Mark left his job as a bank clerk and became a full time punk, selling copies of *Sniffin' Glue* through sympathetic record shops. After 12 issues he realised he was running out of "essential" things to write about (contrary to rumour, Perry claims the famous invocation, "Here are three chords — now form a band", never appeared in *Sniffin' Glue*). The final issue was completed in July 1977. Stapled to the cover was a 7" flexidisc containing one song, "Love Lies Limp". This potent ditty about sexual failure — set to a clanking reggae beat — announced the arrival of Mark's new group, Alternative TV, which had been formed a few months earlier after Perry had met the Glaswegian guitarist Alex Fergusson. The group signed to Deptford Fun City, which was part of a group of labels bankrolled by Miles Copeland (later manager of The Police) and which also included Step Forward, which was run by Perry and which released The Fall's early records. Almost immediately, a rift developed between Perry and Fergusson which led to the guitarist leaving the group (he would later resurface as a member of Psychic TV). ATV regrouped and released its first album, *The Image Has Cracked*. Was this the Year Zero pronouncement promised by Malcolm McLaren's nihilistic rhetoric?

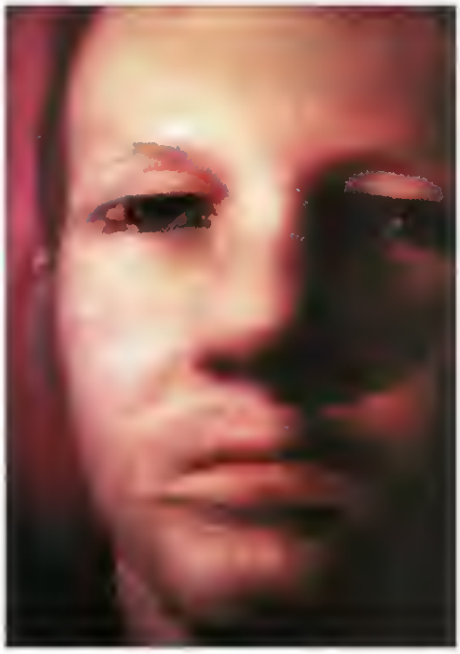
Punk's relationship to rock is too fraught — too interesting — to remain stable, a simple matter of yea or nay. Like Dadaists debating the virtues of anti-art, the contradiction seems inexhaustible. *The Image Has Cracked* railed at the stupidities

Alternative TV rock the house, 1978

of the rock audience, but in order to *revitalise* the music, not propose other forms of communication

"When you look at English life in the 70s, rock music was where it was happening" Perry asserts "Anything of any excitement that was happening — to me, in my world — was happening in rock music, whether it be Bowie or Mott The Hoople About 1975, before punk, I was into Little Feat, Nils Lofgren The year of punk, The Who played at Charlton football ground, which was one of the greatest gigs I've ever seen It's in the *Guinness Book Of Records* as the loudest gig ever And that was May 1976 I was happy with rock music I didn't get into punk to destroy it or because I was dissatisfied with it I suppose I *found out* I was dissatisfied with it, it was that way round"

If you examine *The Image Has Cracked*, it's a tapestry of rock motifs The record's mix of live and studio tracks, and its use of tape splicing, was inspired by Frank Zappa's approach on records such as *Freak Out* (As Mark explains it in the sleevenotes to *Action Time Vision*, a new compilation of ATV material "I wanted the album to be one whole experience instead of just another LP of separate songs") It begins with "Alternatives", a nine minute audio collage of live incidents taped when ATV invited punters up onstage to have their say The background riff was derived from Captain Beefheart's "Drop-Out Boogie" The first side featured a version of Zappa's "Why Don't You Do Me Right?" (an obscure collector's B side), ATV turned its parodic proto-Metal into a plaintive plea for love that resembled The Mekons' "Where Were You?" An ad lib talkover about craving peanut butter on toast in bed — reinforced by a cover photo of a teddy bear hugging a jar of Peter Pan (Crunchy) Peanut Butter — referenced Iggy Pop's famous audience abuse of the substance as armpit freshener Meanwhile, a photo on the back of the sleeve showed Perry laying on top of a spread of his favourite LPs Malcolm McLaren had been furious when Johnny Rotten spoke on air to Capital Radio's Nicky Horne about his favourite musicians (Peter Hammill, Captain Beefheart, Nico, Dr Alimantado, Peter Tosh and Can) McLaren conceived punk as a threat that arrived out of nowhere — an angry, garish blimp on the cultural horizon — and he opposed this contextualisation within underground rock and reggae The most prominent album cover in Mark's collection was *We're Only In It For The Money* by The Mothers Of Invention (with Jimmy Carl Black sporting his thrift-store wig) But there was also *Forever Changes* by Love, *Spirit Of The Boogie* by Kool & The Gang, *Everybody Knows This Is Nowhere* by Neil Young, *The Revolution Will Not Be Televised* by Gil Scott-Heron, *Clang Of The Yankee Reaper* by Van Dyke Parks, *The Notorious Byrd Brothers*, Flying Burrito Brothers, *Clear Spot* by Captain Beefheart, *Who's Next* by The Who, "and just the corner there," Mark points out proudly, "you'd never get that, is *Blues For Allah*, The Grateful Dead classic stuff!" The sole concession to the New Wave was Ian Dury's *New Boots And Panties*



"Alternatives", which is still a simultaneously electrifying and dispiriting experience, held up a mirror to ATV's audience It wasn't a pretty sight A fight breaks out on stage and Perry intervenes, his voice cracking with desperation *"I love all you people, but I hate you when you act like stupid idiots, because that's when they grind you DOWN!"* Then — almost a reprimand to the de rigueur oafishness of the punks — the track cuts to a tape recording of a cultural analyst sententiously describing an arts centre where *"all kinds of movements can develop"* The track abruptly cuts to a different gig recording, with Mark squawking *"even rock 'n' roll!"*, a hilarious segue An onstage speaker then suggests the punks organise themselves like "the blacks in Africa" and wage literal war on the system In contrast to the alien gloss of The Buzzcocks' first record, ATV were using their medium to raise class consciousness Verfremdungstechnik amid the flying gob "Action Time Vision", the second track, was an amphetamine-driven parody of Anglia TV's theme Perry explains that he wanted listeners to work at the record, sit through the lesson of "Alternatives" before they got to the rush of the pop song Just as Public Enemy would later claim rap to be black America's CNN, so Perry had earlier seen punk as a similar kind of alternative to mainstream media a communicator and agitator

When it was released in mid-1978 *The Image Has Cracked* received rave reviews By this point Mark Perry was something of a celebrity figure, appearing on TV and radio to 'explain' the new music, courted as a star writer by both *Melody Maker* and *Sounds*, and now a feted musician himself He looked all set for the kind of career that was then being rolled out for the likes of Joe Strummer and Paul Weller "By that time The Buzzcocks were big," he says "Alternative TV could have gone on a fairly good tour We could have done a Buzzcocks, a Wire, an X-Ray Spex, or a Penetration, and done quite well, on the back of that first album Tour Britain, end at the Roundhouse or the Rainbow, big gig, everyone says it's wonderful — all that"

Instead, ATV hooked up with ex-members of Gong playing under the materialist-mystical slogan Here And Now — a troupe of dreaded *hippies*, the butt of all McLaren's anti-middle class, back-to-rock 'n' roll gestures — and embarked on a free tour

"Miles [Copeland] said, 'What do you mean a *free tour?*'," Perry laughs "I said, 'Well, we don't get paid ' He said 'I'm not sure we can afford to do this' I said, 'Look, this is really good for us, there's a new audience out there' We went off on this free tour — you didn't have to pay to get in Here And Now had been doing it for a year As soon as they told me — free? — I couldn't believe it They just had a whip-round at the end I said, 'We've got to be there!' I couldn't wait for it To me, that was what punk was all about Keep away from The Rainbow, play in a field — play Canterbury University in a field We did Stonehenge, the festival 1978"

However, ATV weren't disappearing into an idyllic hippy backwater For Perry, the tour was a means of reaffirming punk's democratic principles, an attempt to halt its slow death by assimilation "Punk said certain things You could mingle with the bands, talk to them, and that was different from going to see Pink Floyd at Earls Court, you're not going to mingle with anyone at Earls Court [But] the bigger a thing gets the more people get into it — Johnny Lydon not being able to go shopping for records, not being able to walk down the road Then you start getting the boundaries that's a famous person and that's an audience That happens naturally, but at the time we thought there had been a conspiracy to keep the audience out I'm less naive now Now I think performers deserve a certain respect, a certain space"

During the tour with Here & Now, which was documented on the joint LP *What You See Is What You Are*, ATV fell apart — literally (by the end, the group consisted of just Perry and bassist Dennis Burns) and psychically "I was already going off the rails," Mark says "That's when I thought, punk's not worked We've got to find other ways [Miles] trusted me 'He'll do [the tour] then he'll come back to the fold' Of course, I never did come back."

The next official ATV record, *Vibing Up The Senile Man*, came at the end of 1978 Continuity was established with a similar cover design to *The Image Has Cracked* and emblazoned across the front was the legend 'The second album by Alternative TV' However, the music had gone through a cataclysmic shift

"I wanted to break it down," Mark explains "Bare essentials voice and people banging things, space, banging cymbals, poetry I'd started listening to jazz, a friend played me The Art Ensemble Of Chicago I think there's a lot of that influence in *Vibing Up The Senile Man* We were breaking down, going away from rock, away from punk, just exploring"

On the record Mark relates feverish tales of cannibalism, sexual agonies and a dream encounter with the composer Frederick Delius Genesis P-Orridge played

PHOTO (LEFT) BARRY PLUMMER

percussion that emulated The Art Ensemble's 'little instruments' Dennis Burns's excellent bass held it all together, though in the general indignation that followed the record's release, hardly anyone noticed

The presence on the record of Genesis P-Orridge capsizes the idea of a pre-punk/punk/post-punk split. As the lifestories of both Perry and P-Orridge reveal, the notion of such a rift is an obfuscating contraction of events as they actually unfolded at the time Perry had met P-Orridge in March 1977, by which time the former Fluxus activist was working alongside Cosey Fanni Tutti, Chris Carter and Peter Christopherson in Throbbing Gristle P-Orridge subsequently contributed a page to an issue of *Sniffin' Glue* and encouraged Perry to start making his own music

"He was a really important person at the time," says Mark "I'd heard about him through *Wreckers Of Civilisation*, which was in the press, the [1976] ICA show where they used tampax and stuff We met up and talked and became friends He knew about *Sniffin' Glue* He was influential at the time because all I was meeting were punky people, music biz people, and what he was doing seemed really dangerous and interesting, it was so different What intrigued me was the use of other materials, tapes and stuff His studio was an amazing place, he had massive rehearsal rooms and a studio in Hackney, and the sounds they were getting were incredible Our first sessions were recorded at Throbbing Gristle's studio Those recordings are now out on a CD called *The Industrial Sessions*, very interesting, fly-on-the-wall stuff We rehearsed there and developed the songs"

> **"Every gig was like a war. In Derby I got injured really badly. This skinhead threw a bottle and knocked me clean out. It was scary"**

Partly inspired by the kind of intuitive sonic experiments that characterised Genesis's work with both Throbbing Gristle and COUM Transmissions, *Vibing* was purposefully dysfunctional, a protest *in sound* against the routines of punkbiz Unlike Pink Floyd's "Wish You Were Here" (a song about alienation couched in the kind of studio production techniques and business practices that perpetuated it), *Vibing*'s very form smashed pseudo-communication It did so with such violence that Mark Perry's career as a rock star was sunk

"Miles Copeland thought I was joking!" he exclaims "I had this listening session at Pathway Studios Genesis P-Orridge was there, the critics Sandy Robertson and Jon Savage, Miles Copeland, all to listen to the new ATV album I played it and they were going, 'Oh God!' It was a bit of a shock. Miles thought I was mad He wanted to go with me [so] he said, 'Look we'll release it and see what happens The orders were really big People were buying it, but there were so many returns The shops marked them In those days they'd actually scratch them and put a sticker on saying 'returned for some reason'"

Although he'd praised the material when broadcasting an ATV session which premiered some of the album's songs, John Peel didn't play any tracks off *Vibing* on his Radio One show Like the *Faust Tapes* LP, copies could be had at knockdown prices for years ATV had scuppered their 'career' as surely as The Sex Pistols, though in somewhat less lurid and lucrative circumstances Mark Perry would spend much of the 1980s working as a clerk for Lewisham Council However, over the years interest in the *Vibing* monstrosity grew In 1996 Anagram reissued it on CD The booklet includes some fighting words from Mark "I rejected punk's restrictive format and took ATV into a direction that was more like freeform jazz than the three chord thrash! Some critics despised the change, a few applauded it. I didn't give a shit! Punk became the new rock music when it should have been the end of rock music Lastly, to all my knockers *Vibing* will never go away Now that it's on CD it will last forever Truly a brilliant crack!"

The limits of revolutions only become obvious in retrospect. When it was released late in 1978, just a few months after *The Image Has Cracked*, *Vibing* looked possible as a rock record — maybe not to Miles Copeland, but to more leftfield figures Chris Westwood gave it five stars in the now defunct *Record Mirror* On the strength of *Vibing*, manager Dick O'Dell — flush with WEA money after signing The Pop Group to Radar — asked ATV to come on tour with them and Manicured Noise

"By that time ATV was just me and Dennis Burns," says Mark "I'd be playing anything but guitar — saxophones, violins, anything Dennis was still on bass I'd got this guy called Dave George to join on drums, he'd never played drums in his life, he was a guitarist Anno from Here And Now joined us as a singer You can imagine, there's all these punks in the audience and we'd come on, and it's like *screech-dum-dum-dink-dink* And the response was, 'Fuck off!' We'd already moved on to the next stage as far as I was concerned, the poor audience were still at our last album We got bottled I got injured really badly at Derby, this skinhead threw a bottle and knocked me clean out. It was scary Every gig was like a war People were saying, 'But you're not playing what they want' I'd say, 'Fuck what they want — we're musicians for Christ's sake! We haven't joined the army and gone to bloody Belfast, we're just trying to play our music' It was nasty I felt so pissed off I've always thought that to really appreciate music you've got to work hard, but people just didn't want to listen to anything different We played five or six gigs like this The Pop Group really kept with us, they said, 'You can keep playing with us, keep at it They used to come and jam with us I thought 'Maybe the way to do it is to change the name of the band', so halfway through this tour we changed the name to The Good Missionaries"

The tension between the audiences' expectations of what ATV, and punk, should be, and what the group had become, may have caused problems, but it did make the music exciting The Good Missionaries' *Fire From Heaven* album was recorded on the tour (Mark Stewart and Simon Underwood from The Pop Group guest on one track), and it has a real edge The album contained a version of "Another Coke", which had originally been issued as the B-side to the "Action Time Vision" single Textually, the song is a cut-up, splicing a rant against the commodification of punk into an uncomfortably graphic account of a disturbing adolescent sexual experience It's typical of Perry's warts-and-all approach to lyric writing, opening a window on an episode so traumatising, so embarrassing that most of us would want to keep it private Like earlier tracks such as "Love Lies Limp", "Nasty Little Lonely" and "Splitting In Two", as well as more recent ATV material, such as "Jane's Bath" from this year's *Apollo* album, the song lays bare pop music's ongoing oppression

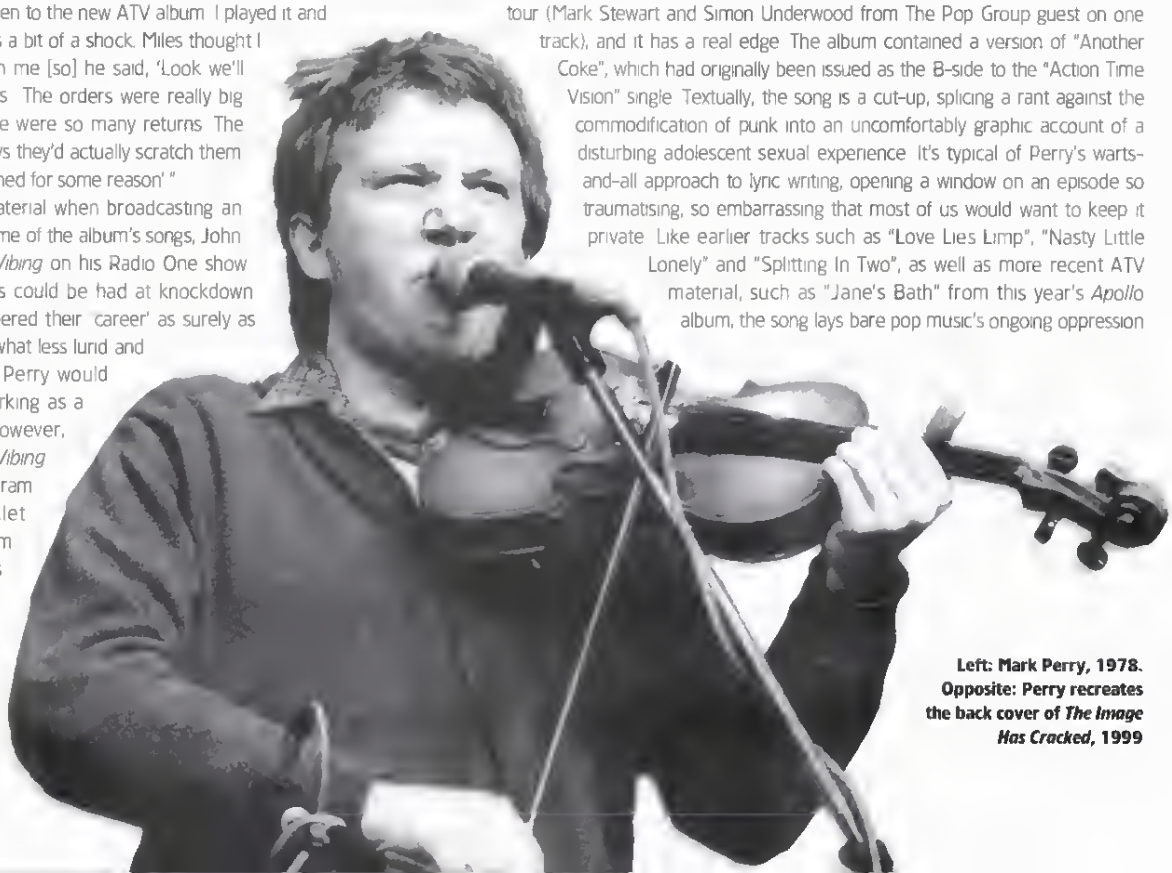


PHOTO BARRY PLUMMER

Left: Mark Perry, 1978. Opposite: Perry recreates the back cover of *The Image Has Cracked*, 1999

of the true nature of human relationships and sexuality with stark clarity

"This sounds corny, but I've always gone for this 'honesty' at the time," Mark says, "but I don't know how it computes in an exact way I always get a bit uncomfortable when other musicians talk about what they are going through and how it's in their songs You sort of know that anyway Most good songwriters abstract it a bit On *Vibing Up The Senile Man* it's all stripped away I find it a bit uncomfortable to listen to Not just the sound, but some of the ideas and the lyrics"

On another level, the version of "Another Coke" included on *Fire From Heaven* hints at the political climate in Britain at the tail end of the 70s, and explains how a music which rejected factional politics in favour of an inchoate philosophy filched from anarchism, nihilism and the Situationists was implicated in the struggle between right and left Before an audience of rabid skinheads, the song is performed using the riff from Bob Marley's "Get Up, Stand Up" These were the days when the National Front were winning local elections and Rock Against Racism were organising gigs nationwide "There was an immediate threat at the time in Britain," Perry recalls "The National Front was getting a lot of headway It wasn't a longterm thing where you could take years over it, it needed something there and then"

Apart from Mark E Smith and Billy Jenkins, it would be hard to point to anyone else from the class of 77 who has kept punk's promise of making music without resort to the manipulations that construct commercial glamour It's easy to forget what a buzz it was witnessing The Sex Pistols making headline news every day But as part of that process, punk was being reshaped as a marketing opportunity, as Mark's encounters with the music press in 1977 demonstrated

"*Sounds* asked me to go and review Paul McCartney and Wings at the Empire Pool — and it was great! The basics of their set was *Band On The Run*, lots of Beatles stuff — "Hey Jude", "Get Back" That was a good band, with Henry McCullough and Denny Laine And afterwards we got to meet Paul McCartney So I wrote a good review They didn't print it because they wanted me to slag him off I was absolutely furious They didn't want me to be honest, they wanted me to do a number on him" *Sounds* wanted to sell papers to readers who were into punk? "That's right 'Mark P says Paul McCartney should sod off back to the old Beatles farm', or something That censorship was bad I didn't go down that road"

In the fallout that followed the release and poor sales of *Vibing*, ATV released a 'Memorial Single', "The Force Is Blind", and effectively disbanded In 1980 Perry released *Snappy Turns* under his own name It sounded like a sequel to *Vibing*, but better, pursuing a poetry 'n' Improv genre he had developed working with The Door And The Window, a group of art punks associated with the London Musicians' Collective

At the time, the LMC was a hive of fringe music activity, a focal point for a ragtag group of disgruntled punks and art rock refugees, including members of The Slits, This Heat and Scritti Politti, recalcitrant improvisors such as Steve Beresford, David Toop and Paul Burwell, and various other unclassifiables For Mark Perry, suddenly alienated from his rightful constituency, it provided a temporary haven "We had some great nights at the LMC We used to do things like playing the radiators It was rubbish, no one would want to listen to an album of it, but the point was we did it, and people were watching it It was an extension of what I'd been doing before"

In 1981 ATV reformed at the behest of Miles Copeland and released a curious album called *Strange Kicks* on Copeland's IRS label (a subsidiary of A&M) The record included contributions from both Alex Fergusson and Dennis Burns, but the recording was dominated by producer Richard Mazda, and Perry spent most of the sessions playing pool in the studio's games room with the former Traffic and Can percussionist Reebop Kwaku Baah It failed to dent the charts

For a musician like Mark Perry the 1980s were a wasteland of Thatcherite politics, market retrenchment, and spurious notions of corporate insurgency peddled by The Human League and Scritti Politti The title of Dave Rimmer's book on 80s pop summed it up *Like Punk Never Happened* So when he wasn't behind his desk at Lewisham Council, Mark's involvement in music making was sporadic and low key, playing drums alongside Dennis Burns in a group called The Reflections, occasionally rolling out the ATV name On the cusp of the 90s he reconfigured the group as a floating pool of musicians with him at the helm, and with interest in punk rekindled by books by Savage and Marcus, not to mention the disastrous reappearance of The Sex Pistols, he released *Punk Life* featuring tracks recorded by Steve Albini, a longterm ATV fan (according to Mark, Albini had a migraine at the time, and mixed the record at a barely audible level)

He is prouder of the new album, *Apollo*, which segues his songs and narratives together, varied instrumentation giving the listener that between-track greed for the next audio confection which pop excels at There's a sense of consequence in his statements, however humorously they're phrased When Mark tells you there's politics in every sausage, you believe him "Communication Failure" uses the old "Get Up, Stand Up" riff again It's about the failure of punk, but the venom and pride in the vocal is undimmed However, Mark keeps things in perspective it's not rock music on the scale that once

excited him "At the end of the day, it doesn't really matter," he says "You're almost playing to nobody *Apollo* has sold in its hundreds We play gigs to a few I enjoy it, and the new band's really great, but there are times when I think it doesn't matter any more"

I point out that my heroes are the artists who carry on regardless, the Lol Coxhills and the Bob Cobbings and Ulli Freers, who do what they do because they're driven to discover new forms, to maintain contact with actual reality — the precious feedback of the few minds that matter, not some spurious penetration of distant markets that can't talk back.

"I'm a bit in between," Mark concludes, "I know the success thing is bullshit, but I do love the whole idea of Bowie up there under the lights, the adulation, the excitement But I appreciate the other side too It was great to see the drummer of The Art Ensemble, Don Moye, just sitting in the Union Chapel bar before a gig I had to go and shake his hand But being a lyric writer I do want more people to listen I'd like more people to take on board what I'm writing and thinking I'm dealing with subjects, I'd like people to comment on what I'm saying I've got this friend called Rufus, a real punk He drew the graphics on *Apollo* He says to me 'What you said in "Communication Failure" is wrong It didn't fail because of people like me It changed my life It wasn't a flash in the pan' It's nice to get that bit of feedback." Action Time Vision The Very Best Of Mark Perry & ATV (1977-99) *is out now on Cherry Red* The Image Has Cracked *and* Vibing Up The Senile Man *have been reissued by Anagram* The Industrial Sessions *and* Apollo *are on Overground Thanks to Luca Bocchino and Andrew Duncan*

When Ralph Waldo Emerson, on the occasion of the laying of the first Transatlantic telephone cable, commented, "But will we have anything to say to each other?", the philosopher of Transcendentalism was expressing a sentiment that, more than 100 years later, seems a forlorn hope. Believing that this new communications technology would become an uncomplicated conduit for information, while leaving that information itself intact and untouched, even a seer such as Emerson could not predict how far the telephone, and its eventual gushing into the delta of communication and recording media available at the turn of the 21st century, would wrench human perceptions of time, space, distance and nationality/locality into unrecognisable shapes. Nor that, as those technologies proliferated, the inherent qualities of their mechanical or silicon based operating systems would thoroughly inscribe themselves into the content of what was being communicated.

But inscribe themselves they did, making it less surprising that certain sectors of contemporary music sound like a facsimile of the sort of ghost crackles that so religiously absorbed Watson, assistant of telephonic pioneer Alexander Graham Bell, when he jacked his ears into that underwater phone extension.

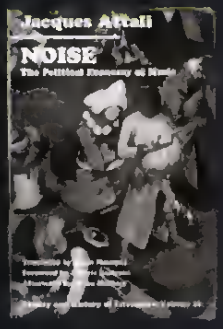
From beneath the frenetic, threshing rhythms of Jungle (touted in the mid-90s as quintessentially 'millennial' energy. William S Burroughs recognised this when he experimented with cut-up speech recordings as sonic weaponry. In *The Job*, Burroughs describes a plot to put a coffee bar which had treated him disrespectfully out of business with a tape recording of its ambience: "a deadly assassination technique" for annihilating a public authority or other offending establishment figures. By electronically trapping a fragment of time in a specified space, then re-injecting it into the building or playing it back to the subject, with various extraneous noises of disapproval bled into the mix, Burroughs believed its blood would be poisoned.

Burroughs's glitches in time — packages that can be torn open and the contents spilled — had the power to "discommodate or destroy" their intended targets. For Jacques Attali, prophetic author of *Noise: The Political Economy Of Music* (1978), the potential of music-as-interference — 'unmusical' music — was latently, inherently revolutionary. "Music announces that we are verging on no longer being a society of the spectacle," he wrote, and for the many individuals and collective labels currently utilising sonic detritus as the main ingredient of their music, this strikes a deeply resonant chord. For today's 'glitch' electronix — equally audible in the rhythmic athletics of Autechre, the skipping playbacks of Oval, the delicate sampling compositions of John Wall, and the lunar song of Coil — have shifted Deleuze's statement that the smoother the surface, the easier it is to deterritorialise. In German, the word 'glitsch' means to glide, slide or slip — a greasy or oily surface is glitschy. So there's this duality embedded in the word, of skidding and catching, which perfectly encompasses the Oval track "Do While", from *94 Diskont*. Following the previous year's *Systemisch*, this record drew closer attention to the creative potential of malfunctioning or mistreated equipment. Damaged CDs — you can hear a trace of Eno's lunar-landing soundtrack *Apollo* — are set running and jumping on standard issue players and the results sampled, then reorganised into kaleidoscopic patterns or caustic interludes.

Glitches abound on a new double CD on the Mille Plateaux label, *Clicks And Cuts*, which features many of the global electronic musicians who have followed in the wake of Oval, including snd, Crank, Stilluppsteypa, Pan Sonic, Pole, Dettinger, Kit Clayton and Kid-606. Regular use of the word to describe a musical gesture originates around 1994, the year of Oval's seldom bettered *Systemisch* CD, as well as *Worship The Glitch*, credited to ELpH vs Coil. But one of the first decomposers must have been Pierre Schaeffer, whose *Symphony Pour Un Homme Seul* (1950), assembled in cooperation with Pierre Henry, still sounds like a turntablist's bridge-passage, with shouting voices and whistles that cut out before their own sounding has

street music), a very different vibration has fermented, feeding off the technical errors and unplanned outcomes of electrified society — the world at the mercy of the glitch. Crackles, pops, pocks, combustions, gurgles, buzzes, amplitude tautenings, power spikes, voltage differentials, colliding pressure fronts, patterings, jump-splices, fax connections, silent interjections, hums, murmurs, switchbacks, clunks, granulations, fragmentations, splinterings, roars and rushes have overwhelmed the soundscape — as if the Ambient soundfields on the Cage-Eno axis have been zoomed in on until we are swimming amid the magnified atoms of sound. Characterised by colossal shifts in dynamics, tone and frequency, this is an urban environmental music — the cybernetics of everyday life — that reflects the depletion of 'natural' rhythms in the city experience, and in the striated plateaux of the virtual domain.

The glitch is only conceivable in a world where music has become partly or wholly mechanised. Recording converts sound into an object, and as an object it is vulnerable to breakage. At the same time, the object as capsule of sound (a measure of lived time scooped *out* of time, just as the photograph snatches a moment of lived visual reality) can accumulate power, potential



Prophets of the margins: seminal glitch texts include William S Burroughs's *The Job* and Jacques Attali's *Noise*

the emphasis of 'spectacle' from the event we look *at* into the lens we look *through*: a society of the speculum, probing the deep internal/infernal plumbing-percussion of the frequency spectrum.

The etymology of the word glitch is instructive. In mechanics, a glitch is a sudden irregularity or malfunction. It suggests simultaneously a slippage of gears or wheels — a failure to engage — and a scratch, a small nick in a smooth surface that recalls Gilles

expired (condensed sonic ciphers not unlike the downgraded grunts and thuds of a modern day kickboxing arcade game). Heard today, these half-a-century old pieces are irretrievable from their own tape decay — the crackling aesthetic which has translated into work by Christian Marclay, Philip Jeck, Pole, Mego's Pure (their *End Of Vinyl* mini-CD was totally composed of vinyl run-out groove recordings).

Previous locked-groove experiments in vinyl (beginning with Boyd Rice/Non's *Pagan Muzak* 7"album of 1978) brought out the infinity factor in the process — turning a disposable single format into a drone stretching from here to eternity. When the Fairlight sequencer emerged in recording studios around 1982, chart hits began skipping and stuttering in a strange foreshadowing of Oval's underground digitalia. Paul Hardcastle's "N-N-Nineteen", Duran Duran's "The Reflex", Double Dee & Steinski's "The Motorcade Sped On", and the chorus of Black Box's "Ride On Time", all pockmarked the consciousness of anyone exposed to daytime radio during this period.

In underground digital music, where the glitch currently resides, it has released its grip on the vocal tic, and seized hold of pulses as they materialise out of silence. It

WORSHIP THE GLITCH

Undercurrents #12: concluding our series uncovering the hidden wiring of 20th century music on a bum note, Rob Young celebrates the accumulation of dirt and dissonance in the work of Autechre, Coil, Oval, John Oswald, Mego, Mille Plateaux and more

could be the deep internal percussion of the bowel or of plumbing (Pan Sonic, Pita), random cracklings like a bicycle ridden over a path strewn with leaves (Bernhard Gunter, Yasunao Tone), the rasp of a plastic shopping bag caught in a wind gust (Neina, Pole, Noto), interference from a mobile phone on an analogue line (Microstoria, shuttle253), tiny pops like sherbet exploding on the brain (snd, Frank Bretschneider), painful cattleprod power surges (Ryoji Ikeda, Minoru Sato). When you let sound be itself, strip it of the imperative to represent human sentiments literally, you are not necessarily making something inhuman. At their best, these nicks and cracks are wounds — reminders of the frailty, mortality and imperfection of human endeavours.

At the end of 1998, the New Zealand guitarist Dean Roberts issued a CD called *All Cracked Medias*. Its three longform tracks of computer-processed acoustic/environmental sound foregrounded the notion of the 'crack' between layers in the music making process. The glitch is very often the product of so-called 'cracked' software — computer applications for either altering signals or structuring and laminating them in some way, which has been hijacked, bootlegged, altered or customised in order to evade copyright. Popular software for distorting and bending sound files include Super Collider, Audio Mulch, Metasynth (an audio-visual translator in which a picture file can be converted into sound digitally), GRM Tools (a morph-ware product from the Paris audio research centre founded by Pierre Schaeffer), Akira Rabelais's Argeiphontes Lyre, Max and its shareware successor MaxPlay (included by Tokyo based Christophe Charles on his *Undirected* CD-ROM in 1995), ProTools and SoundHack. Bootleg software is known to be unpredictable: features can be missing, crashes are common, unexpected effects and clashes of operating system all make the use of cracked material perilous. Recently, new Mac laptops running at 333 MHz and above have actually been known to run *too fast* for Cubase, so the software's inbuilt metronome veers and stutters erratically.

When the metronome does run like quartz, though, sequencers have assisted in bringing glitches to the post-Acid House dancefloor. The leading exponents of this 'Crack House' include the US's Theo Parrish, The Martian, DJ Spooky and Kit Clayton, the UK's Surgeon and Cristian Vogel's Trash collective (not forgetting his vocal duo Super_Collider), Germany's Wolfgang and Reinhard Voigt, Thomas Brinkmann (known to apply a Stanley knife to his 12"s while they're spinning), Jurgen Paape, Bernd Friedmann, Farben, and the Berlin Basic Channel/Chain Reaction faction. The snipping, scything backbeats of Jurgen Paape's "Triumph", released in late 98 on Kompakt, gouge the ears and force the feet into a hot tin roof dance — not so much beats as potholes sucked out of the ground you're treading on.

Structured around a 4/4 Tech-pulse, the skittering minimalism of the likes of Autechre, snd, Vladislav Delay, Arovane, Monolake and Frank Bretschneider slice Techno off the bone, building a twitchy, edgy microfunk around an absent centre — all that remains are the offbeats, syncopated clicks and imagined accents, accidental pulses that might have come from a blemish on a side of vinyl. Taking this concept even further is sound sculptor Kim Cascone, a contributor to the Raster-Noton and Ritornell labels, whose ongoing 'triptych' *blueCube* takes its structure from what Cascone calls "residualism" or "pulsar synthesis". In his words, this involves "the process of removing a signal until all that's left is its ghost-signal or the artifacts thrown off by the signal". The glitch is the residue, detritus, fading light, the dead skin of industrial standards.

Oval's Markus Popp states that most digital music is based on the reproduction and replication of industry standards. In other words, when musicians begin utilising software packages, modular synthesizers, effects units, computers and a combination of all these, they enmesh themselves in a creative environment that they have little control over. Popp's productions disobey instructions, discovering a sound quality and mode totally unplanned by the manufacturers. A jump or skip is no longer a problem or a fault, but a musical gesture in its own right.

Throughout the history of electronic music, pieces have been composed specifically for certain instruments — Morton Subotnick's *Silver Apples Of The Moon*, for instance, was practically a demonstration piece for the late 60s Buchla Modular Series 200 synthesizer, which was one of the first electronic keyboards to integrate the previously separated modular blocks of the Moog system into one compact dashboard. Now, synthesizer design has kept pace with the need to disrupt, transmute and distort: the analogue Wasp, favoured by Add N To X, and the devilishly red and black modules made by the Swedish company Nord, for example, seem calculated to appeal to glitchers, dirters, fluffers, splatterers — the inbuilt noises and filters on these expensive machines are inherently low res.

Granular synthesis, a blanket term for the bitmapping of sonic information in digital music, pulverises sound, makes a dust of music. In the hard drive's gigabyte wilderness, grains can be scattered like seeds and the potential for genetic modification seems infinite.

For some reason, in 1994 a handful of artists dedicated to recycling this floating audio-litter emerged fully formed in Vienna. Pita, Rehberg & Bauer, Christian Fennesz and Farmers Manual have become synonymous with state of the art glitch through the releases on their Mego label. Complemented by the sliced up digital graphics of Tina Frank (aka Skot), releases such as Pita's *Seven Tons For Free* and *Get Out*, General Magic's *Frantz!*, Fennesz's *Hotel Parallel*, Farmers Manual's *No Backup*, plus the CDs those artists have released for the OR, Touch and Tray imprints (Rehberg & Bauer's *‹Faßt›* and *ballt*, Farmers Manual's *fsck* and *Explorers_We*, and Fennesz's *Plus Forty Seven Degrees 56' 37" Minus Sixteen Degrees 51' 08"*) cleave closely to the singularities of computerised sound. How do you speak the title of Pita's "~/" out loud, for example? It is a title — and by extension, a music — that can *only* be typed in, which explains why so many glitch tracks end up with names that use invented or hybrid words, or signifiers that look more like binary code. Filenames such as Autechre's "Acroyear2" and "Fold4,Wrap5" typify the 'working titles' Michael Fakesch of Funkstorung calls "Euro-English", a prototype form of the universalised technoid Newspeak that's likely to become standard across the continent ("Surfaise", "Diesehle", "Sega").

Farmers Manual specialise in invented words and apparent nonsense, which they not only talk among themselves but even provide as a subroutine on their Website to pick an (un)word at random. Their own Web-posted statement of intent reads as follows: "During the performance we seek to shift the local atmosphere from dissolution and clumsiness through manual change and ecstatic fiddling into an imaginative state of complex monotony, structured calm and chill, or endless associative babbling, so that towards the end the authors become the audience and the audience can be confronted with a stage populated by machines only, which can't get out of infinitely rendering a stream of slight semantic madness. The set-up then is what is normally considered a sort of installation. All this with the help of extreme freqencies and distorted, flickering images." Quoting among their influences Marcel Duchamp and radical graphix artist David Carson (whose most infamous trick, as art editor of *Raygun* magazine, was to convert an entire Bryan Ferry interview into the Zapf Dingbats font, that is, a page of unreadable icons), the Farmers experience is a profoundly disorienting, psychedelic anti-art ordeal that one report of a live show described as "luring the mind along some previously uncharted perceptual interface".

Farmers Manual tend to either delight or infuriate live audiences with their static Powerbook performances. Aural outcomes refuse to tally with what you actually see the individuals doing on stage — there's a perceptual displacement that leaves you feeling there's something wrong with where you are. Not leaving the listener any room for interpreting via language, or by supplying linguistic clues to the 'meaning' of tracks, you are thrown back on the spikes of the music itself — its raw aural power. It's significant that Pita, Fennesz and their recent collaborator Jim O'Rourke increasingly find their Powerbook operations welcomed among various free improvising caucuses. Like the 'moment to moment' deep listening of groups such as AMM and Morphogenesis, and 'microvisors' like Radu Malfatti, Thomas Lehn, Phil Durrant, John Butcher and Mats Gustafsson, their real-time patchworks enact Attali's phrase about "doing solely for the sake of doing, without trying artificially to recreate the old codes, in order to reinsert communication into them". In other words, improvisation substituting textures and intuition for tempered scales, the geometry of the stave, and the internal logic of the sonata or symphonic form, arrives at a new definition of composing. In Attali's words, the self-sufficient composer "takes pleasure in the instruments, the tools of communication", whereas previously composers manipulated limited harmonic means to enact narratives already ingrained in history and myth (cf opera). The glitch is the condensed essence of this new fundamental shift: an effluenza virus.

At the same time as pulverising sound, though, granular synthesis also makes it into a pliable material that can be subjected to laws of gravity — or even have unearthly forces applied to it in the computer environment.

The most celebrated operation in IDM circles is the 'Bucephalus's Bouncing Ball' effect — an algorithm used by the likes of Autechre (check "Drane2", the final track on *LP5*) and Aphex Twin (who titled one track after the equation) that plays a pulse back as if it was an object bouncing on a table, subject to the force of gravity. You can imagine a future software that can be tweaked to apply laws of gravity stronger or weaker than that of Earth, acting on different substances, accelerating or decelerating them, squashing or compacting them. In the glitching, serrated burr-beats of Aphex, Squarepusher, Autechre, Nonplace Urban Field, Funkstorung, Mouse On Mars, *et al*, a multitude of clicks are crunched together, tamped down into an illusory single pulse. These ripped, zipped beats provided a tentative bridgehead between the glitch and 'street' musics like Jungle and drum 'n'

Drifting in the digital blizzard. Left: Bernhard Gunter (top) and Autechre. Right, top to bottom: Mego, Dean Roberts, Farmers Manual

PHOTOS AUTECHRE JAY BROOKS MEGO ROB YOUNG

bass Earlier, on *Grayfolded*, Canadian John Oswald used similar techniques to pack hundreds of hours of Grateful Dead live recordings into a single audio meatloaf Common time (use time, exchange time, leisure time) locks you into the tyranny of sequential time, the earthbound temporality that mystics and hermits meditated their way out of

In Francis Bacon's Utopian tract *New Atlantis*, which decribed a 1627 imaginary world in which European travellers step into a kind of Pacific future-parallel universe, the scientific society of Bensalem is found to contain "sound-houses, where we practise and demonstrate all sounds, and their generation", according to the travellers' host "We represent small sounds as great and deep, likewise great sounds extenuate and sharp, we make divers tremblings and warblings of sounds" Such an approach to sound was the diametric opposite to the course of music in the ensuing centunes, which saw the growth of the symphony and the lionisation of the compositional ego — a sector which has created a classical music industry in which music is praised or criticised solely in terms of (a) its faithfulness to or departure from a score, and (b) its recorded clarity

But the call of *New Atlantis* finds its response down the centuries in Jacques Attali's still visionary *Noise* Attali's discussion of new modes of production, written in full knowledge of avant garde and electronic music practice, anticipates the play of textures and grains with uncanny accuracy "The only possible challenge to repetitive power takes the route of a breach in social repetition and the control of noisemaking," he writes, his version of repetitive power equating to authoritarian and socially repressive tactics In place of rigorously controlled cultural production, Attali imagines a more improvisatory, on-the-fly method of productivity, but he already envisages a mode in which harmony has been shattered, with a musician working with the nuts and bolts of sound rather than their fine tuned, well tempered scales — the checks and balances that civilise untrammelled noise "The musician, once outside the rules of harmony," he writes, "tries to understand and master the laws of acoustics in order to make them the mode of production of a new sound matter Liberated from the constraints of the old codes, his discourse becomes non-localisable Pulveriser of the past, he displays all of the characteristics of the technocracy" In other words, digital freedom comes with a price attached confusion gets disseminated from the fringes as much as from power centres It therefore becomes the task of acoustic engineers to make a humanised noise, to wrestle the new tools into a language usable by the listener

The apparition of the glitch displays the desire for an art that wrinkles time On its own, a glitch does not amount to much It accumulates power by its insertion, its irruption in a flow of events It is the random factor, the spark that ignites the primordial soup, the flash that illuminates the status of music as phantasmagoric time, not a utilitarian timekeeper

German composer Bernhard Gunter, celebrated for his Zen-like minute sounds, which he describes as attempts to pass into a post-linguistic state of meditation, prefaces his latest recordings with notes towards a new valuation of time Subjective time elapsing while listening to music, reading or studying an artwork, contends Gunter, passes differently from regular clock-time "In my work as a composer," he says, "I have often found that listeners believed a shorter piece to last longer than an actually longer one, and that their estimates of the duration of a work were often quite far from the actual chronometrical one These considerations together with the interest I have taken in neurological research into our perception of time have led me to devise a new time unit for measuring the duration of my musical works Research has found that our perception of 'present', 'now', 'the present moment' is a time window of about three seconds, everything else is memory or anticipation" Gunter's new piece *Slow Gestures* is 464 3 dim in length, the dim being the name he gives the new unit (from the French 'duree, ici, maintenant', or 'duration, here, now')

The background crackling that suffuses Coil's *Musick To Play In The Dark Vol 1* silverpoints John Balance's vocal invocations, communions with dead family spirits, vegetable meditations and misanthropic critique The record is a transmission of intimate thoughts, nocturnal secrets, worldly advice — curious digital outlaw songs, spun round a wilderness blaze "Drew [McDowall] gave us a great source of very deeply tweaked granular synthesis material," Balance writes on the Coil Website "The clicks are meant to represent the digital equivalent of the fire crackling This is Moon Musick Coil are creating lunar consciousness musick for the foreseeable future It goes against previous magickal currents we have invoked We are letting things in we shut out before The feminine The tidal The cyclical" Who better than the original glitch worshippers to embark on the task of pulling the glitch away from its Techno-utilitarian origins, charging it up with the urgency of myth, and stitching it into a narrative of cyclical time? □

Digitised dissidents: Coil (top) and Oval

PHOTO OF COIL AMY & TANVEER

1999
Intonorumori - Intonorumori
M'lumbo - Spinning Tourists in o City of Ghosts
Amy Denio - Greotest Hits
Pineol Ventono - Molproctice
1998
Jupiter 88 - Jupiter 88
UnFolkUs - UnFolkUs
Bethony Curve - Gold
1997
Bill Horist - Soylent Rodio
SubArochnoid Spoce - Ether Or
1996
Bethony Curve - Skies A Crossed Sky
Nocturne Concrète Compilotion
Gorden - A Dolls Life 7"
Intonorumori - Sound Colloges Cossette
1995
Vossily - Kym/Allegory 7"

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matters of

Mourning becomes **Diamanda Galas**. Invoking her Orthodox heritage, she
century perpetrators of Greek-Armenian mass-

life & death

has turned her death songs into a weapon trained on holocaust revisionists, be they early 20th acres or today's silencers covering up the reality of AIDS. Words: Ian Penman. Photography: Tim Kent

Leaves are falling in New York, there are rays of yellow copper on the grey walls and of red copper on the windowpanes. Desert magnificence of autumn. Dying days, morning light. The cast of our Singer is unmistakable: a Giacometti brought to life by a chance breath of love. Given permission to leave behind her stagey plinth for an hour or two, she is a splendid agitation in black chine and purple crepe. All angle and shadow, she casts rescue beams everywhere she steps — a witch whom the neighbourhood secretly adores. Diamanda Galas (which doesn't rhyme with Callas) meets a certain recognition everywhere she strays. It's not the forbidding diva of legend people hail, but the woman behind her X-ray eyes: an envoy of risk, honesty and commitment. Renowned for her litanies of evil, she is considered a force for the general Good.

She is in good spirits, rejuvenated, perhaps, by her annual Halloween performance, an important ritual for Galas, marking a date which, she has said, she takes very seriously as "a celebration of the drawing back of the veil between the living and the dead". She doesn't expound any further, but it could certainly be viewed as the marker of a forgotten genocide — or gynocide — made up of all the witch burnings in Europe back in our First Dark Ages: a misogynist pogrom against women whose 'outsider' status marked them out as sacrifices in villages often afflicted by the Plague.

But Halloween is, now, a *mascarade* (a Jean Genet definition of femininity), and when the mask is removed, much remains to be faced, be it in farflung dressing rooms or over cappuccinos in a favourite East Village cafe. If you have a cherished imago of the Singer as a pole star of solemn and inflexible gloom, you should know that in person Diamanda (which rhymes with nothing obvious) is a spangled whorl of life, self-mocking laughter and hilariously off-message remarks about 99 per cent of art/pop icons — "And you can *quote* me on that, honey!" In other words, she's lovely, but if she were the Marines, you wouldn't get in.

Almost everything she says is demanding — not as weak stars are demanding. Rather, our Singer's demand is a concatenation of cutting rejoinders, compassionate pleas and grave reminders: signs of exorbitant life in a time of channel hopping. What she speaks and what she sings constitute a paraphrase of some valuable advice when The Last Poets once addressed to their more immediate constituency: *"Wake up niggers, or y'all dead."* At century's end, what Galas says is this: we must not turn our faces from the doleful wake of History — even if, in Julia Kristeva's words, "we can hear the burst of black laughter it hurls at all attempts to master the human situation". Galas's passion — her 'difficulty', her often literal bloodymindedness, her impatient love — only seems contrary in a culturally bloodless time.

PHOTOS TAKEN AT HEART SALON NEW YORK CITY. HAIR & MAKEUP TINA MONTALBANO

Galas's current touring work — *Defixiones Will And Testament* — is the latest in a long line of vital song cycles, and its appearance makes a (bloody) circle of both our criminal century and her conscientious art *Defixiones* addresses the complex historical legacies of Turkey, from the massacres of Armenians and Greeks in 1915 and 1922, to today's hairtrigger situation As far back as 1981, her first recorded work already addressed such matters *Song From The Blood Of Those Murdered (Tragouthia Apo To Aima Exoun Fonos)* was a vocal 'malediction' served on the military officers who oversaw the junta that ruled Greece between 1967 and 1974 Since then her work has spanned the tripartite plague mass *Masque Of The Red Death* ("a work composed for the dying of this disease, the dead and the people they have left behind"), more 'conventional' Song collections (*The Singer, Malediction And Prayer*), and work which unflinchingly depicts states of torture and isolation (*Wild Women With Steak Knives, Panoptikon, Vena Cava, Schrei X*)

Characteristically, *Defixiones*'s mourning tone opens onto a wider horizon acute about the matter in hand, but trailing clear metaphysical implications for all Mass extermination, far from receding in the postmodernist dawn — with its wet dreams of 'the end of politics' and the 'disappearance' of War — seems to step up a gear with each new era, once the dirty secret of secret campaigns, murderous paramilitary duplicity is now openly flaunted in zero sum war games 'Guerrilla campaigns', 'ethnic cleansing', 'local conflicts' an official vocabulary which denatures what it ostensibly names In opposition, Galas keeps questions alive by literally breathing life into them, through her Song's dauntless work of mourning The way in which she resuscitates forgotten fact, twisted myth and irruptive memory is in direct relief to the petty vengefulness — the *negative* mourning — of bad nationalisms everywhere Not to mention bad faith artists

"That strain of nationalism is what actually kills off the artist," she says, all bristle and hiss "It puts them in exile, because they're the ones that are always asking the questions and challenging things And it also encourages this kind of extremely bland, touristical kind of *folk music* thing " In today's Turkey, she notes, official musicologists pronounce on traditional musics to isolate an imaginary pure strain, erasing the accreted 'interminglings' of alien contamination "How do they know what was Turkish and what was Greek and what was Armenian?' she argues "How do they know what was what? Because there's never *been* such a cosmopolitan place like Constantinople "

Galas airs things from no fixed vantage point she makes herself a whole cast in order to sing She composes in five different languages, and has sung in ten, her voice's character ranges from the Ray Charles-in-hell pimp roll of *The Sporting Life* (her underrated 1994 collaboration with John Paul Jones), to the eerie crater sc(r)ape of *Schrei X* (1996) She can be an unnervingly 'natural' singer, but also one whose innovative use of electronics and delay and Revox places her on the perimeter of what the voice can do She is one of the only singers this century to take their voice seriously — to serious places — as an experimental instrument She is composer, performer, site/sound designer and her own best critic

In *Defixiones* there are fragments of Beirut diary and ethnic plaint, the vulture breath of free jazz (Ornette Coleman) and the lonely crow keen of field blues (John Lee Hooker), liturgical prism and gospel flight. This is her textual community of exiles, the latest cast of the Many she continues to be She also taps into a more specific European modernist tradition, exemplified by her stark setting of a dark poem by Belgian writer Henri Michaux (1899-1984) Michaux literally put the hex back into text, seeing his poems as raw acts of psychic ill will His words here — a ritual invocation to dispel pain and revive love — might be a mission statement for Galas's own continued battle against the forces of prejudice and apathy *"I am rowing/I am rowing against your life/I am rowing/I split into countless rowers/To row more strongly against you/I am rowing against your days "*

"The amount of oppression that the Turkish government has encouraged through the means of religion is so " She stops, sighs, rows on "They have mandatory inspections for women to see if they're virgins, which means they have license to rape these women If you are a film maker and they find out you are 'problematic' — ie homosexual — your films get disqualified from competition It's akin to the Nazi Party really, it's the same thing, and of course they worked with the Germans so many years ago when they were getting rid of the Armenians and the Jews There's such a proximity between these cultures and these are things that are very discouraging "

Maybe she feeds on discouragement where others just shrug and flip channels Where many of us are defeated by the ideological minefield of internecine struggles, she plunges in, armed with a secure arsenal of facts, conducting an unstoppable mission of research and deploy Memory could be her second strongest weapon

"I think one of the things people are discovering is that the first genocides of the century were *not* the Holocaust, they were the Armenian genocides [It does well to remember she is talking about her ancestors here] And the thing that was most *characteristic*, let's say, of the Turks — forced marches, deportations — is so much related to how the Jews were killed off in places like Lithuania, where they would be marched into the forest, shot and then buried, and they would cover it up They would say where are we going? Answer *'Into the interior'* People are discovering that many of these things have gone on for quite a long time "

It seemed clearer back in the days when the Holocaust was considered a singularity, a once-only apex of Evil Now we can see, there are and have been holocausts everywhere, always "And they don't seem to be stopping " From Stalin's Soviet Union to UN failures in Rwanda and Srebrenica, it's our post-Industrial Fall Midnight deportations and mass graves States of torture and State tortures Galas insists that we do not duck the complex roots of these things — but her singleminded gall inevitably tramples on certain toes A difficult politics of Holocaust appropriation — conjoined political interests in Israel and the US, for instance — works to maintain the idea of the(ir) Holocaust as bearing no comparison Information which brings to light, say, the Armenian genocides, is blanked or buried "So here you have people who have been in a parallel situation being *completely* unsupported," she continues

Galas speaks up for the oppressed — but fiercely, at a far remove from the 'insidious' therapy culture of 're-live' and forget She demands respect for the dead and the dying, the tortured and the torn, but also expiation from their persecutors She draws power — not pity — from this rage, and rages against the dying of our compassion She locates guilt everywhere without exception She excoriates Israel, but equally bemoans the obscene consideration that Jews must still insist — "EVERY DAY!" — on the indelible fact of the Holocaust "It's a *fact*, it's not a fiction " Increasingly so, in a time when right wing revisionism and high postmodernism meet in a sad, airless, chiastic place where it's easier to b(l)uff up glamour theories about late capitalism as an endless 'simulation', rather than dig out less chi-chi facts about acts of slaughter in the service of multinational progress

"With the Armenians they're told to say to the Turks 'Oh we forgive you, we shouldn't hold it in our stomach for this many years, since 1915' or whatever But you *can't* forgive when someone doesn't apologise! How can you forgive when someone doesn't apologise or doesn't, for example, *pay up*, and doesn't do anything except take books off the library shelves that have to do with the genocide and throw them into the trash ?"

At 11 in the morning, Galas speaks with the kind of precipitous, white water spirit most of us only summon post-midnight, after too many post-prandial spirits Her continued resistance takes the form of an unwavering archival vigilance Each time she sets free (or fire to) some forgotten song or poem, I suggest, what she is in effect

saying is the past *isn't* over, history *hasn't* yet been written

"Yes," she agrees emphatically "*Yes* That is the ideal — that is the *real* ideal — I would have *thought*, behind what poetry was when it was delivered and why it was incantational so that it would *have an effect* It's like Michaux the idea behind the poem as hex is to hammer, hammer, *hammer* and that is the only reason I should be putting myself in a position where I could interpret their work, if I felt by doing this that I was keeping the work alive Otherwise I shouldn't touch it"

"My relationship with the world," she once said, "is not founded by a territorial or geographic domain" But Galas has a personal stake in the testament of *Defixiones* The caste of our Singer is rich and strange Often passingly referred to as 'Greek' (which is notionally true, and a shorthand she herself uses, but which may also have been carelessly wielded in the past to fit in with perceived notions of the post-Callas diva), her family background is in fact a deep reservoir fed by Mediterranean tributanes Her father was Turkish-Armenian, her mother Armenian-Syrian She knows tales — especially from her mother's side — about how caste was set against caste, how 'troublesome' others would be recruited, apparently 'supported', but deprived in the process of weapons, addresses, redress "And these are the things I am talking about in this"

Her background must have played a crucial role in her work's studious polyphony Raised in San Diego by Greek Orthodox parents, Galas had an extensive classical music training as a child and later played gospel and New Orleansy jazz piano with her father's band at Army and Marine bases From her mother's side she inherited knowledge of her Maniatic ancestors, women who sang chilling dirges for relatives killed in feuds She played keyboards from "almost the beginning of life — I started out playing Beethoven, Brahms, Fats Waller, Greek music, Arabic music, everything" As a heritage almost, she was lots of different people to begin with, I ask? "My parents were I wasn't," she corrects "I was isolated When they moved out to California my brother and I were truly isolated There was no community for us because there was no one around that was Greek or what have you California was kind of like a freeway place, you have these big roads and people are very isolated and the watchword was Watch out for the Americans — they'll fuck you up!"

Her family's encouragement was paradoxical she could pursue music from an early age, but within certain strictures Piano was fine, but singing was off limits — singing was the preserve of whores, and her Greek Orthodox father banned this particular form of libidinal self-advertisement "My father was very protective," she remembers "I, as the girl, had no liberty *what-so-ever* — except to practise the piano, maybe read and do anything inside the house But if I went outside the question was why are you going outside? What possible reason could you have to leave this house? You do not need to leave this house!"

She laughs fondly, as well she might all over the world the Singer is now a household god to many a disgruntled adolescent She refuses to blame her parents, though, as per victim culture diktats Mr and Mrs Galas certainly seem to have produced two singular children in Diamanda and her brother, Philip Dimitri But in previous interviews her mother has seemed strangely absent

"My mother's someone I *haven't* talked about enough," she agrees "My mother's a very courageous woman who believed that I should always do what I wanted to do, pretty much Not always so much the singing, but she really encouraged me to fight for everything, she has fought for everything that she's ever gotten, she's been head of a lot of different kinds of schools [and] organisations run by men who would really try to sabotage or *oust* her because she was too strong She's been through a lot of hardship but she has mastered the situation, so in a sense I studied from her as a woman"

Her late brother Philip — playwright/essayist/activist/performer and, as Galas is wont to remark, "a fucking homosexual!" — seems to have been the presiding influence on his sister's artistic and activist worldview When they left home, they continued to room together (he writing in the attic, she downstairs at the piano a set up with more than a hint of Cocteau's *Enfants Terribles*), and he introduced her to many of the authors whose influence has stayed with her down the years ("He turned me on to Artaud, Gore Vidal, Baudelaire, Lautreamont, Nerval ") Her experience of nursing him through the HIV/AIDS to which he eventually succumbed, aged 32, in 1986, deeply underscores all her subsequent work, not just the AIDS related *apokalypsis* of her 80s suites Artistically it's a more complex, phantasmal matter "We were like twins, practically twins," she has said of Philip, in successive works you can hear her Song

become a stage on which Philip continues to have his say. Any given song echoes with many other voices, while remaining indubitably her timbral take on things. The cast of the singer is herself, her many absent friends, and myriad other traditions. Listening to "My World Is Empty Without You" (The Supremes song on *Malediction And Prayer*), you can hear shades of Cecil Taylor, Nina Simone, Lorraine Ellison.

Another paradox the listener experiences her often baroque choice of source material as something razor sharp, needle thin, purged of unnecessary clutter. Her operatic presence works its transgressive magic(k) best in performance. For Galas singing is a ruthless discipline redolent as much of the corrida as the pietà: a blade turned against the song's own throat. If song is her addiction then the microphone is its syringe, extracting her vital pulse in the process of a transforming facilitation. She will readily engage in discussing microphone technology, unafraid of spilling a little demystification as she goes. More interesting, maybe, is not what she says about it but how her voice immediately changes in the telling, flowers, splits into a happily daemonic cast list (nasal, vaudeville, impish, Ethel Merman), as though she only had to say 'microphone' to trigger a metamorphosis already underway. The same happens during long gossipy phone sessions "in which I become *extremely* vicious and sarcastic and if that goes on too long I tend to get into this *nasal* register. The phone tends to amplify one part of the voice."

This reads like a footnote from Avital Ronnell's *The Telephone Book*, which daisychains together Freud's *Mourning & Melancholia*, Laingian schizophrenia and 20th century techno-babble. The Singer has used up to seven microphones in performance, and it's easy to hear why: there are at least seven sisters encamped inside the Diamandian 'I'. My own trademark mumble comes out fine on the interview tape, but Galas's voice is a different (spectral) matter, as if her singular pitch and velocity are just too *baffling*. She speaks with the skim of an unreconstructed speed freak, and it's difficult to recompose in print her full-on and unpunctuated polyphony: badgering, declamatory, playful, moving seamlessly from Armenian scholarship to lame AIDS movies to the sex profiles of different drug users before exploding in showers of starburst cackle. Was there some point when things clicked, when a different kind of singing began and she learned to inhabit the micro/phonal realm?

"I'm *still* learning with those microphones. Because my tendency is when I get louder is to get closer — because then it starts distorting and then I like it even *more*, which can be nice if that's what you're intending to do, although it freaks the engineer out when everything starts feeding back. My tendency is to want more and more and more to push it to 11. But it's better to *intend* to do it. For me and other people who have a wide dynamic range and use a lot of different vocal timbres, there are certain vocal timbres with a lot of high noise. When I'm going up to high D above high C it's just *cruel* to the engineer. I love it, but he's dying."

The Singer in her (offically a 'lyric spinto soprano' leaning toward a 'mezzo with a higher and lower extension') was bequeathed a natural three/four octave range, but one aspect of the Galas style comes out of a distinctly *un*natural detour via the *techne* of recording. "I think it's my own fault for listening to all these opera recordings *SUPER* loud in my car when I used to drive to my singing lessons," she confesses. "So I heard operatic voices distorted on the whole. I loved it, it was great, but it was not the real sound: it was their *distorted* voices."

As per Ronnell's thesis, schizophrenic cast meets and mingles with technological projection. She has said that when she puts her voice through its staged delay of microphones it's like "occupying a polyrhythmic schizophrenic space" which divides up her personality. So, when she sings, is she lost/found? Is she always in control or can the voices she locates sometimes surprise her?

"Well, the ideal is that on a technical level I know what I'm going to do before I do it. It's like the old Coleridge line: 'He who is best prepared can best serve his moment of inspiration.' But once you're there — in, let's say, the family of the sound you're trying to make — then hopefully you'll be able to be surprised by how far you can take it. So say you're singing maybe three pitches at the same time — if you find that you're taking one of those pitches and using it almost as a fundamental, the more that you reverberate it, the more that you give it a kind of a vibrato, then you generate an *other sound*, then you get *surprised* and you can find yourself developing a melody over the fundamental of one of the other pitches — but those are all functions of where your voice is that day, how much you've travelled, the sound system. That's the only reason I work on technique: so I can go on stage and improvise and be *free*. I have a new relationship with the text every night. Because otherwise why do it? Why the fuck do it? Why repeat the same shit over and over again? That's when I would say: record it, and have done with it."

After school and before singing, she found herself living and working in a series of situations that flew in the face of security. She subjected her safe Californian narrative to a violent interruption of existential crises, her personality a text she was free to rewrite at will. Life as a coin flipped between heads (breakthrough) or tails (breakdown). A triad of major influences at this time: her brother, Jimi Hendrix and Oakland's transvestite prostitutes with whom she spent an extended long weekend in the 1970s. She found being a woman a drag — until she found the veiled Revelation of drag: Diamanda no longer, masquerading instead as 'Miss Zina', a woman dressed as a man dressing as a woman. Click: the safe tumbles. At this Robert Johnson moment in her life, she seems to have cast her daily fate like a dice: piano player, street tough, honours student, immunologist, performance artist. She was probing — methodically — all the things that decide who or what we are, at the same time she was shedding all the things ganged up a priori to s(t)eal her personality's fate. A deconstruction in stilettos: before she can become who she is, she has to abandon everything she is supposed to be. Something here, too, of Foucault, in the trajectory from methodical self-derangement, through her deep cover investigation of sexuality and madness, to an eventual plateau concerned with longterm 'care of the self'. The Scholar draws up her own course of study in what is irresolvable, impracticable, non-normalisable. Sheer polyvalent perversity: to learn singing she listens to horn players (Ayler, Coleman, Coltrane), to understand femininity, she understudies drag queens. Life as an improvisor's risk.

> **"There are certain vocal timbres with a lot of high noise. When I am up to high D, it's just *cruel* to the engineer. I love it, but he's dying."**

She studied immunology and neurochemistry at the Scripps Research Center in La Jolla, California, and received multiple degrees from the University of California. (Immunology: as if preparing herself for a war she unconsciously knew was ready to erupt.) Her academic life has the logic of a double agent's stroll. Having originally entered university to study biochemistry, she arrives in the music department by way of experimental psychology — becoming her own biochemical experiment in the process. She set up base camp at "the interface of biochemistry-neurochemistry-biology: Skinner, Pavlov, John Lilly, all that shit that was going on at the same time". She took an academic, then more than academic, interest in drugs: what you might call her supplementary education. Superficially, all these experiments in living seem to

have no common thread Unless it is that she was in fact using them all equally to *un*learn her supposed inheritance?

"It's very interesting in order to deprogram yourself, you in a sense have to program yourself into something else and then you have to fucking *de*program yourself from that, you have to keep cleaning the slate and the process is one of great effort. You have to *remain* in the process of cleaning the slate — it's very arduous work I almost feel the same thing of art, because it's constantly extroverting all this stuff — and then you never listen to it again Then you reconfigure your vocabulary or invent a new vocabulary"

It's all good it's all technique You can hear traces of every last thing hear it clearly, here today Technique one in her twenties she studied bel canto for several years, and around 1975 began her solo career performing in underground theatres and psychiatric institutions She toured semi-conventional opera, moved to Europe, moved around, and worked with such leading European avant garde composers as Pierre Boulez, Vinko Globokar and Iannis Xenakis Globokar had written a work which required a singer who could "begin every evening singing like a lyric soprano and finish screaming like an animal" At this point, her avant-guardedly 'conventional' minimalism fades into the background, as she first begins to exploit the possibilities of multiphonics and more extreme vocal techniques

All these techniques have ended up in the service of almost unclassifiable work If there is no simple name for what she does, one that suggests itself is 'the work of mourning', as Freud described it Her dream of 'incarnate' vocal theatre goes beyond clear distinctions between text, performance, song, bringing it close to the dream of theatre' envisaged by Artaud and Genet a place where death is aired, the Singer's body becomes a stage on which she allows the *other* to speak Rather than soliloquy a theatre of *ventriloquy* 'That's the spirit behind the Maniatics, the women that sang the dirges," she explains "When they're singing usually it's the first time they've had any privileges to do anything outside the house at all, and they go to this place and they try to absorb the spirit of the dead, speaking to the dead, when they leave their bodies there's a medium for the dead before the death bird comes, which is the idea of the vultures or birds as the soul stealers that would come in and take the last breath of the dead and steal it"

This ancient myth dovetails with present concerns she has expressed rage over the despicable way AIDS patients are often treated How lovers and friends who had stood by them through their decline are summarily banned from funeral services held by families who only step in posthumously to run a pristine, scab-free service

"It's like let's go to their funeral *after* they're dead not when they're sitting there on their bed with KS sores and screaming with dementia oh no, no, *no* 'I knew he was really sick so I thought I'd come back when he felt better' Like when he was in the grave six feet away? Society in general has such a lust for the dead Alice Cooper was so right when he sang "I Love The Dead"! I really wanna sing that, although I know no one will understand"

Talk of 'stolen breath' recalls not Alice Cooper but Antonin Artaud, as does her description of her voice as 'an instrument of torture' Was he a pivotal influence?

"A lot of what I say is influenced by many many people," Galas says "Artaud is only one of them I was reading Poe and then later Baudelaire, and I realised that Baudelaire had translated Poe, and Artaud was inspired by Baudelaire and Poe, and I found these interesting relationships between all these writers, which makes me very happy, because I've always thought of them as sort of like brothers"

As well as this modernist brotherhood, there is also a long tradition of 'gay modernism' — Genet, Pasolini, Fassbinder, Foucault — which was of earth-shattering importance for many of us It was something more akin to 'an education of love' But it seems in danger of dying away One of its last great rhetoricians, French theorist Guy Hocquenheim, wrote a memorably unrepentant threnody for Pasolini after his murder "We can't all die in bed " Depressingly, this proved to be not wide of the mark, written just before the tendrils of AIDS began to snake around some of the best minds of any generation

"Right," Galas agrees "It's really scary There was one year where Ginsberg, Burroughs, all my friends, all these visionaries, were dying, and it's scary because you think, now what? Who's left? Who are these — it's a quote from my brother — 'Who are these *wretched self promoters*'? Really, everything is about how much they're able to sell the thing for, how much press they can get. it's not art per se, it's just *real estate*, like everyone just wants to be Julian Schnabel."

Political fragmentation may have rendered the idea of a committed art 'unfashionable', but Galas has little time for the tidy pieties of postmodernism.

"You see the same thing over and over again, things repeat themselves throughout history: someone who focuses on one technical aspect of something and claims it as his innovation Robert Wilson? I've always felt him an overrated interior decorator — and you can quote me on that, honey! Wilful, *wretched* self promoters with one or two ideas interested in being head of a fraternity who really could just as well have been Donald Trump, you know? Artaud would talk about the plague as being the incarnation and he would say you have to *incarnate* this, you can't do anything less, if you do anything less, you're wasting time People like Michaux and Artaud were never interested in being part of any movement and I love that, of course

"There's an expression," she proposes, "the difference between the *desire to speak* and the *need to speak*: the need to create a vocabulary to survive It's such a difference but you hear it because you know when there's an imperative and when there isn't."

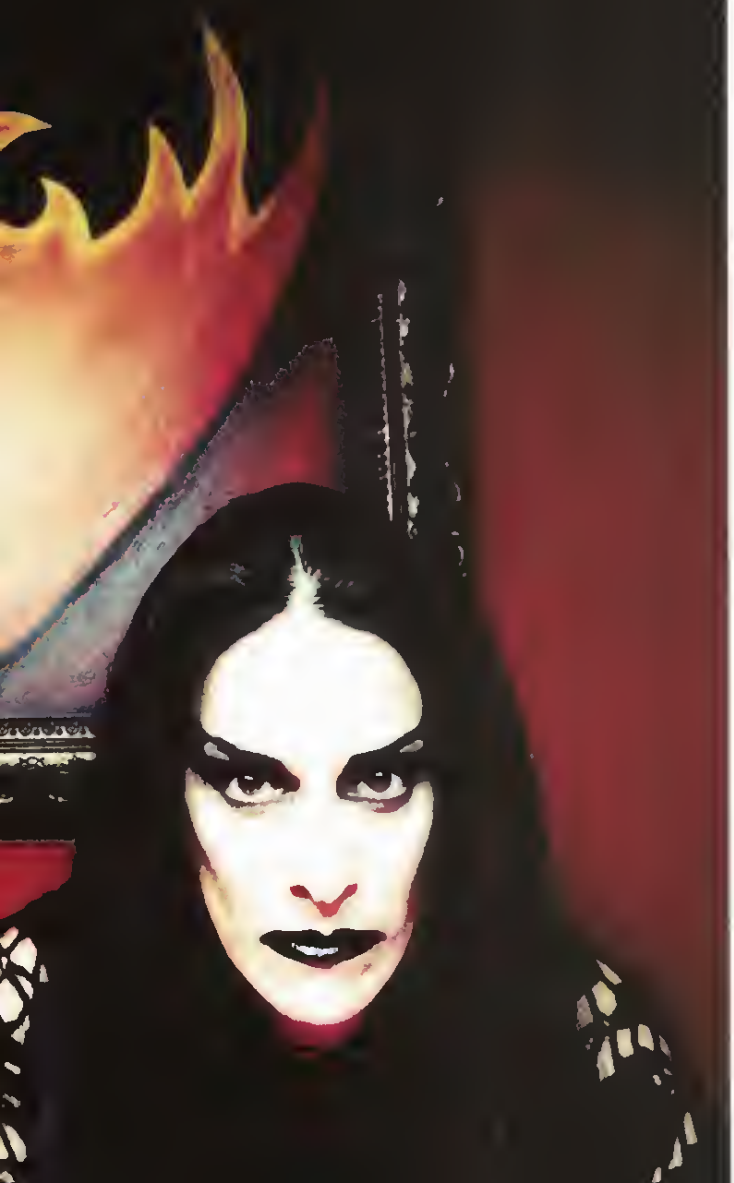
The Singer has no time for play-acting in what should be matters of life and death. Art can never be a simple (and occasional) act of charity. Charity is only

charity when it is worked at, daily (just like art) and not italicised for maximum self-exposure as part of what Galas calls the "Hallmark" culture of millennial pseudo anxiety. As if the apocalypse isn't already here, as if it hasn't already been here for decades. "When my brother died, that was the apocalypse for me," she states, simply.

Did her brother's death deprive her of an essential dialogue — almost as if a crucial part of herself had been lost? "With him, no, it continued. . . it continued in the sense that when someone dies and you look at something you automatically think: what would he have thought, what would he say about this? Or the fact that I now sing much of my work in this *low, low, low* voice which I never used to do before. My parents noticed it. This happened when he died and suddenly. . . I was singing differently than before. And that was my way of, I think, *keeping* him."

Song as mourning and mourning as prophecy.

The fact that she began her mourning work long before it was strictly 'necessary' touches upon the very root and spell of her song. Her mourning is never passive or palliative — but vengeful, affirmative, a willed survival. Interestingly, as she points out (via more faultless historical research), the figure of the mourning woman in Greek culture has traditionally been that of an antagonist. "The dirge singers, the women from Sparta, where my people are from, would sing to the dead person rather than about the crucifixion of Christ as a representation of that person's death."



Orthodox priests, trying to maintain the patriarchy, preached against the singers' way as being sacrilegious and a form of (oh yes) witchcraft. It was considered unduly incendiary and consequently forbidden, but the tradition continued nevertheless and evolved into very political singing. As Galas has pointed out, it was always 'political' anyway, because it involved very oppressed women who were otherwise not allowed to be seen (except behind long black veils) or heard, not allowed to do anything except work or serve. "Then when someone dies they are totally transformed." It is by all accounts a truly frightening performance: personally alchemical, collectively political. When the Nazis invaded Greece during the Second World War, the women sang savagely anti-German tirades. This was mourning as incitement. "It incited people to be so angry they would fight. It was never mourning in the pacifistic sense,' says Galas, who sees her own work in this tradition: it takes place "in the transition from funeral singing to something that is also very political and antagonistic." She sings 'for' the dead, but also (a more difficult notion) finds her song co-signed by the dead. "What I think of in terms of my work is leaving something, leaving something behind — which actually relates to *Defixiones* a lot. One of the things it is, it's a warning or a hex, a warning off from the grave of the dead, saying: if you take these bones and this body, your daughter and her daughter and her daughter and her daughter will be trampled to death by horses, will expire in terror . . . because this is my inheritance. It's like speaking for the dead."

Mourning becomes Diamanda: it simultaneously dispels toxic frustrations and keeps up her conversation with absent others. "It's like speaking for the dead . . ." Aether signs, angel talk, spirit babble, song as radar, time machine, electrocardiogram. Who, strictly speaking, is present when she sings? 'In concert' takes on an uncanny, double meaning here. Sometimes listening to her records alone is just too much, it takes an audience of hundreds to absorb all she might throw out. Our collective strength just about equals hers under such conditions.

Casting her net over a wide sea of different sources, she repeatedly catches the 'same' text: in Baudelaire or Skip James or the Bible she finds the same resonances. Same language, different tongues. A many tongued song for the denied, the rejected, the refused: a glossolalia of revenant tones. A point where gnosis and Gospels meet: similar arc, different ends. Biblical language cuts to our core far more than any cut-rate Freudianism. Words such as grace and damnation, hubris and redemption and fall, touch us more powerfully than any late century rationalising syntax. The Singer's favourite is Psalm 88: *"Oh Lord God of my salvation, I cry day and night before thee. My soul goeth near to the grave. Thou hast cut me off."* It is, as she observes, an archetypal language of suffering which just happens to have been hijacked by Fundamentalist cretins. Like Genet before her, Galas reappropriates the language of the Passion under the sign of her own perversity. A passion which unites the possessed, the dispossessed, mystics, mourners, exiles, endtime refugees. An army in the shadows. All our hospice tomorrows.

The singer herself is now nearing her half-century, and looks to be at the top of her game. Behind the Halloween mask of her public image, you find her embodying aspects of her mother, her father, her brother and her own various doubles, for an icon of extremity, she is, in fact, one of the most 'rounded' artists we're likely to get. She was diagnosed with Hepatitis C more than a decade ago now, but shows no signs of turning the heat down under her wrathful ways. A dozen different Galas 'futures' beckon. "I mean, what do I have to look forward to? Oh, that's right . . . the year 2000. What the *fuck* is that?" Quite. If anyone deserves the right to lay claim to an utterly personal eschatology, it's our Singer. For nigh on 20 years, *every* night has been 'millennium' night in Galas's throat. As the century ends, who better to entrust its last note to than this peerless Singer, our Lady of the Microphone, Diamanda Galas, her diamond mind, her uncanny and unrepentant song: its *glas?*

"When you get to be older I think a lot of us think about that, we think that you leave this body of work behind and it speaks for you and that's your mortality. Because I'm not a breeder: I could give a fuck to waste my time with that! Fuck that!" An exultant smile turns her face into a half moon of mischief. "It's nostalgia, a totally nostalgic culture. It ends with *you* — it totally does." *Diamanda Galas performs* Defixiones: Will And Testament *at London Barbican on 9 December. See Out There for details.*

On the eve of the next millennium, we look back on the music that defined the final year of the 20th century. Beginning opposite, we list the **Records of the Year**, as voted for by our team of writers and critics. In addition, starting on page 68, our contributors give us their personal pros and cons of 99, while starting below, some key players reflect on their own year at the sharp end of music

99 REWIND

Singers & Players

John Cale

The eyes have it.

When you're in trouble you think things can't get any worse. Then they do. Then you think... no, they can't get worse than this... you're wrong again and they do. Then when they absolutely positively can't be worse than they are... they turn atrocious. Then you start looking into people's eyes. To see. Ah yes. There it is. Wide apart. Soft and thoughtful. Red rimmed and unseeing. Sleepy watchfulness. The opportunistic kind. Reading the shine in them like shellac on a formica table. You try to look through them. At the inner you. Where people hide their fears. Where light and matter meet in the dark, feel each other up for a giggle, and lick each other's ears for ambition.

It was the year revenge became popular. It swished onto the stage with a sibilance that was razor sharp. It slit our throats with Zorro. Awash in twilight blood and angels. It cleansed and purified. Murder most popular. Grinning.

Most of us had better things to do... roll on. /forward slash/forward slash/

EL-P (Company Flow)

Amidu Diallo was shot at 41 times, hit 19 times, and died once at the hands of New York's finest. Public Enemy released their best album in years only to be ignored by fans and condescended to by the media. Same thing happened to Nine Inch Nails. *The Phantom Menace* dropped, fulfilling my lifetime ambition of seeing a terrible *Star Wars* movie. I could afford to live without room-mates for the first time. The Internet seeped into the lives of millions, opening endless gateways of communication and expression for trainspotters, know-it-alls and Nazis. I personally log in about 200 hours trying to download free porn, 600 hours playing online backgammon. MF Doom album finally dropped. Most common criticism about the new Co Flow instrumental album for 99: there aren't any lyrics. We start a new independent label called DEF JUX. 'Peekachoo' replaces 'Barny' as most likely to be a tool of the Anti-Christ. Mike Ladd album drops... possibly the best album of the year. I re-read *The Chronicles Of Narnia* for the first time in ten years and realise that it's pure Christian propaganda. I tried ecstasy for the first, second, third, fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh and eighth time. Co Flow goes on tour to support *Little Johnny From The Hospital*, bringing along Mr Liff, BMS, Cannibal Ox and The Jugganots. Alec Empire remixes the song I dropped lyrics for on Handsome Boy Modelling School, replacing my lyrics in an interesting but incorrect cadence. Everyone thinks it's me trying to be 'futuristic'. The world has a Cassandra complex... ignoring the oncoming Doomsday.

PHOTO: DEAN BELCHER

50 Records Of The Year

Mouse On Mars Niun Niggung (Domino)
Sonic Youth Goodbye 20th Century (Smells Like/SYR)
Coil Musick To Play In The Dark Vol 1 (Chalice)
Matmos The West (Deluxe/Vague Terrain)
John Butcher & Phil Durrant Secret Measures (Wobbly Rail)
Arto Lindsay Prize (Rykodisc)
Jim O'Rourke Eureka (Domino)
Evan Parker Electro-Acoustic Ensemble Drawn Inward (ECM)
Supersilent Supersilent 4 (Rune Grammafon)
David Sylvian Dead Bees On A Cake (Virgin)
Mos Def Black On Both Sides (Rawkus)
Pan Sonic [A] (Blast First)
Die Like A Dog Quartet Little Birds Have Fast Hearts (FMP)
Stereolab Cobra And Phases Group Play Voltage In The Milky Night (Duophonic)
Tom Waits Mule Variations (Epitaph)
Pita Get Out (Mego)
Basement Jaxx Remedy (XL)
Capt Beefheart & The Magic Band Grow Fins: Rarities 1965–82 (Revenant)
The Fall The Marshall Suite (Artful)
DJ Vadim USSR Life From The Other Side (Ninja Tune)
Isotope 217 Utonian_Automatic (Thrill Jockey)
Philip Jeck Surf (Touch)
Company Flow Little Johnny From The Hospital (Rawkus)
Powerfield Electronic Electric Electronic (Paratactile)
Vinicius Cantuaria Tucuma (Rykodisc)
Charlemagne Palestine Schlingen-Blängen (New World)
Tom Zé Postmodern Platos (Luaka Bop)
Crank Wanton Phenomena (Mille Plateaux)
Paul Panhuysen Lost For Words (Table Of The Elements)
Lamb Fear Of Fours (Fontana)
Jon Hassell Fascinoma (Water Lily Acoustics)
Ali Farka Touré Niafunké (World Circuit)
Paul Panhuysen Partitas For Long Strings (XI)
The Grateful Dead Dick's Picks Vol 14: Boston Music Hall 11/30/73 & 12/2/73 (Grateful Dead)
Alog Red Shift Swing (Rune Grammafon)
Angus MacLise The Invasion Of Thunderbolt Pagoda (Siltbreeze/Quakebasket)
Argan South Moroccan Motor Berber (Barraka Al-Farratshi)
Luciano Berio Sequenzas (Deutsche Grammaphon)
Femi Kuti Shoki Shoki (Talkin' Loud)
Alan Silva & William Parker A Hero's Welcome: Pieces For Rare Occasions (Eremite)
Innerzone Orchestra Programmed (Talkin' Loud)
Caspar Brötzmann Mute Massaker (Mute)
Aphrodite Aphrodite (V2)
Pole Pole 2 (Kiff SM)
To Rococo Rot The Amateur View (City Slang)
Jonathan Harvey Le Tombeau De Messiaen (Sargasso)
Flanger Templates (N'Tone)
Chicago Underground Trio Possible Cube (Delmark)
Pelt Empty Bell Ringing In The Sky (VHF)
Pandit Shiv Kumar Sharma Sampradaya (Realworld)

Avant Rock & Out Pop

Bonnie 'Prince' Billy I See A Darkness (Domino)
Royal Trux Veterans Of Disorder (Domino)
Godspeed You Black Emperor! Slow Riot For Zero Kanada (Constellation/Kranky)
Can Live 1971–77 (Spoon/Mute)
Low Secret Name (Kranky)
Pelt Empty Bell Ringing In The Sky (VHF)
Bardo Pond Set And Setting (Matador)
Jim O'Rourke Eureka (Domino)
Blue Cheer Hello Tokyo, Bye Bye Osaka (Live In Japan 1999) (Captain Trip)
High Rise Speed Free Sonic (Paratactile)
Papa M Live From The Shark Cage (Domino)
Iggy Pop Avenue B (Virgin)
Arto Lindsay Prize (Rykodisc)
Sam Prekop Sam Prekop (Thrill Jockey)
The Fall The Marshall Suite (Artful)

Electronica

Oval Szenanodisk (Thrill Jockey)
Kit Clayton Nek Sanalet (Scape)
Matmos The West (Deluxe/Vague Terrain)
Nobukazu Takemura Scope (Thrill Jockey)
Pita Get Out (Mego)
Dettinger Intershop (Kompakt)
snd Makesnd cassette (Mille Plateaux)
Crank Wanton Phenomena (Mille Plateaux)
Hrvatski Oiseaux 96–98 (Forced Exposure)
Monolake Interstate (Imbalance)
Curd Duca Elevator 2 (Mille Plateaux)
Surgeon Force And Form (Tresor)
Autechre EP7 (Warp)
Alog Red Shift Swing (Rune Grammofon)
Super_Collider Head On (Loaded)

Global

Various The Bali Sessions (360°/Rykodisc)
Femi Kuti Shoki Shoki (Talkin' Loud)
Argan South Moroccan Motor Berber (Barraka Al-Famatshi)
Vinicius Cantuaria Tukumã (Rykodisc)
Cheb I Sabbah Shri Durga (Six Degrees/Nation)
Nitin Sawhney Second Skin (Outcaste)
Pandit Shiv Kumar Sharma Sampradaya (Realworld)
Ali Farka Touré Niafunké (World Circuit)
Tony Allen Black Voices (Comet)
Sainkho Naked Spirit (Amiata)
Tom Zé Postmodern Platos (Luaka Bop)
Monks Of The Sera Je Monastery Ritual Music And Chants Of The Gelug Tradition (Amiata)
Sekehe Joged Trisakti Bali: Le Gamelan Sekehe Joged Trisakti (Bali Collection Vol 2) (Playasound)
Caetano Veloso Ommagio A Federico E Giulietta (Universal)
Ernst Reijseger & Tenore E Cuncordu De Orosei Colla Voce (Winter & Winter)

Writers' Pros & Cons

Pros Finishing Captain Beefheart book and re-emerging, late into the year, into tentative social interaction after ten months of hermetic isolation. Being interviewed on Radio 1 about Beefheart and managing to not sound like a total dork. First holiday in five years cycling and walking in windswept Scotland. Playing at the Melbourne Festival with Towering Inferno in October. Complete lack of millennial angst.
Cons Penury, mental and physical exhaustion and psychic dislocation brought about by writing book and having nothing to talk about except the above — surely there must be an easier way of making a living? Missing out on virtually everything this year, musical and otherwise. Photos of people with their mouths open pretending to shout. Journalists and/or musicians who do a bit here and there and then pompously set themselves up as pan-cultural, neo-Renaissance men. Global events that make all the above seem totally trivial.
MIKE BARNES

Pros Most downright wonderful and little-known live gig was The Jabbar Karyagdy Mugam Ensemble, a passionately refined instrumental trio from Azerbaijan, playing on a summer lunchtime in Stationers' Hall for the City of London Festival. Live musical bliss also from Georgian choir Mtebi, Eugene Chadbourne and Tobias Delius groups at the LMC Festival in May, Carl Craig's Innerzone Orchestra at the Scala, Bill Frisell & The Willies in the Barbican, and Kevin Volans's birthday bash on the South Bank. These last three were all in July. Caroline Kraabel's Mass Producers multi-sax group swirled around the Hackney Round Chapel in October.
Cons Did anything go wrong in 99? If it did, I just put on the Bali CD by The Wondermints, and everything went back to being Brian Wilson-tinted again.
CLIVE BELL

Pros At the end of this millennium I find myself turning increasingly to Early Music, particularly to the radical madrigals and motets of Carlo Gesualdo (c 1564–1613). Also to the visionary works of early 20th century pioneers Debussy, Scriabin and Ives. Elsewhere, Peter Hammill's recent towering *Typical* (Fie!) is my song album of the 90s, Michel Doneda's Improv solo *Anatomie Des Clefs* (Potlatch) makes him the most poetic saxophonist on the planet; and Butcher/Durrant/Russell's *The Scenic Route* (Emanem) is group Improv at its most sensitive. Bob Drake and David Moss also had wondrous works on offer. Painterly sustenance: Jackson Pollock exhibition at the Tate Gallery, and Geneviève Lacambre's sumptuously illustrated new book *Between Epic And Dream*, about the art of Gustave Moreau. Getting connected.
Cons After 15 years, insufficient advertising revenue probably means the end of my beloved magazine *Rubberneck*.
CHRIS BLACKFORD

Pros The most memorable concert of 1999 was Cecil Taylor with Max Roach at London's Barbican Centre. The most heartwarming was a generous performance by Martin Carthy, in vintage form, alongside Dave Swarbrick, thankfully resuscitated and also in excellent musical fettle. The invaluable Alga Marghen gets my unequivocal nomination as record company of the year. Looking to the future, the recent three CD documentation of superb performances by Reinhold Friedl's ensemble Zeitkratzer holds promise of still finer things to come.
Cons The sobering departure of some great spirits: Harry Edison, Katie Webster, Milt Jackson, Art Farmer.
JULIAN COWLEY

Pros The electronic revitalisation of experimental Improv by the laptop brigade and associates (MIMEO, Fenn O'Berg, O'Rourke *et al* on Cardew's *Treatise*, Butcher & Durrant, Supersilent, Derek Bailey), Christina Kubisch's clocktower project at MASS MoCa, the ever wacky and astute Friedrich Kittler's *Gramophone Film Typewriter* illuminates our machinic heritage, Ulf Poschardt's *DJ Culture* despite itself, the reissue of Michael Nyman's *Experimental Music*; re-reading Lydia Goehr's excellent book, *The Imaginary Museum Of Musical Works*; Chuck D and MP3 vs Def Jam and the Recording Industry Association of America, Web radio from CKUT, my book on Nietzsche hot off the press, teaching, writing and thinking music with composer Dan Warner.
Cons MTV, commercial radio, and the poverty of overground musical life, gratuitous attacks on academics in the music press, Rudy Giuliani, Hillary Clinton and the sorry state of the public discourse on art.
CHRISTOPH COX

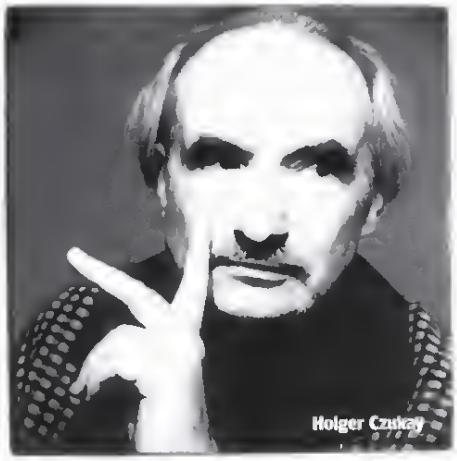
Pros Hell in Belfast, David S Ware in London, record shopping in Tokyo, Afterlife, upcoming publication, public baths, Jackson Pollock at the the Tate, Cleo at the Globe, food, RA The Rugged Man, Marilyn Ivy, more Kawabata gold discs, the house coming down with Rallizes and Haino live tapes, "Hands on Experience", Beef in a box, Org, mail and post, Gary Smith.
Cons People, rubbish, earthquakes everywhere, *The Phantom Menace* ("Why don't we use the secret tunnel?"), not getting to see Maher Shalal Hash Baz or Acid Mothers Temple, househunting, TV, nuclear 'accidents', too many projects and too little time, too many CDs and too little money.
ALAN CUMMINGS

Pros Yuen Woo-Ping and his latest students. Philip Corner, Lamb and Charlemagne Palestine live. People Like Us, and, as always, *Homicide: Life On The Street*. The latest batch of minimalist music reissues on CD. Adnan Barber's finger theatre, and Brian Haunton at a Norman Lamont book signing. Weddings, friends, holidays, trams, croquet and a happy reunion in Edinburgh. Various eclipse events, including James Turrell's light-sculpture. Oh, and my new home.
Cons As always, Andreas-Whittam Smith, Jack Straw and all who sail with them. All the minimalist music still to be reissued (*Strung Out*, anyone?). Pedestrian crossing road rage, and my neighbours. Various eclipse disappointments, including clouds, and James Turrell (I can't make up my mind).
BRIAN DUGUID

Pros Getting married and moving to Japan, Roedelius playing at our wedding, Huun-Huur-Tu and Charles Hayward concerts, *Run Lola Run*, Kyoto and Nara, NICAF — a great little cafe/record/book shop in Omotesando, Hawaii, Qatar and Barcelona, ICC, XTC, MUFC, Tokyo public transport; Toop's *Exotica* and Cale's *What's Welsh For Zen?*, Fuji Rock Festival (vibes), MiniDiscs, (still) not needing a car; *Lonely Planet*; e-mail.
Cons Less and less time for music, paucity of good electronica, Fuji Rock Festival (music), Tokaimura nuclear cock-up, missing four weddings, a funeral, friends and an eclipse, lace-up shoes, summer humidity; slow progress with language and mobile phone, *www*.
DAVID ELLIOTT

Pros Harry Beckett/Charles Hayward/John Edwards at the Instant Music Meeting, London, Dai Kyodo at the Albany, London, Borbetomagus at the Spitz, London, *The Late Junction*, BBC Radio 3, John Pilger; *Mark Thomas Product*, Channel 4 TV, J18 and the rise of global resistance, sustainable living.
Cons US/UK sponsored East Timor massacre, US/Nato in the Balkans, depleted uranium, global warming, housing in London.
PHIL ENGLAND

Pros Turning 3D. Most euphoric moment was unexpectedly watching Arto Lindsay leave his seat in the audience at the Vinicius Cantuaria showcase at Ronnie Scott's to join him ▼


Holger Czukay

Holger Czukay
What a speedy development I had to face being upfronted involved facing new perspectives of the new media Though signing up a good deal with EMI I feel everything but being proud on it it is more a shake hands attempt with a dying monster wishing him a last farewell And what a good feeling remains having all rights back for the start of my own label and sample bank headtransplant Oh before I forget I have never thought of becoming an adviser for Ford automobiles Europe concerning the sound quality of their upcoming engines generation This alone shows me that I am not looking confidentially into the future, I am crash driving confidentially into it also Cheers!

Christian Fennesz
Only pros cd_slopper MP3s on falsch, Nobukazu Takemura — *Scope*, Autechre, The Flaming Lips — *The Soft Bulletin*, King Tubby — *Dub Gone Crazy*, Hecker, Farmers Manual — *No Backup* 99, Sonic Youth — *A Thousand Leaves*, Karkovsky & Schafer — *Disruptor* Stilluppsteypa — *Reduce By Reducing*, Nuno Canavaro — *Plux Quba*, *www.cyberbohemia.com/o w!/*, Sluts 'N' Strings & 9D9 — *Carrera Remixed*, Pita Get Out, Joyce — *The Essential Joyce*, Chris Marker, Fender Stratocaster, MAX/MSP, Jim O'Rourke — Eureka, Kevin Drumm, *Grow! For It Vol 2*, Miles Davis *In A Silent Way*

Mats Gustafsson
Pros The new wave of Swedish improvisors, young, hungry and brilliant David Stackenus, Lindha Svantesson, Johan Berthling, Niklas Korsell and others My first meetings with Thurston Moore, Greg Goodman, William Parker and other GREAT spirits!

Reading Sture Dahlstrøm Finding out about the greatness of Hanna Hoch, Gal Costa and Jean Dubuffet Holy shit! Peter Brotzmann, DKV and Per Henrik Wallin kicking AALY Trio's ass Celebrating the best 'traditional' Swedish Midsummerfest ever, together with my girls and some HEAVY friends! Chicago's Empty Bottle and Nickelsdorf what is there more to say? Vinyl still provides my DNA with DEEP vibrations, great finds were Gigi Gryce on Signal, *Born Free* on Scout, MJT+3 on ARGO, Chris McGregor's *Very Urgent* and the original soundtrack of *Batman And Robin*!!! PJ Harvey, Vandermark, Lovens, The Ex YOU ROCK!!!

Cons Musicians without dedication and spirit, friends struggling, and stupid minds with political ambitions! And I still can't find that Derek LP on Nondo

Femi Anikulapo Kuti
I think this year has been very exciting We had a lot of changes and new things coming at the end of 98 to 99, eg Lauryn Hill, Fela's back catalogue And I believe more changes will come I look forward to a very interesting and exciting new year I still believe African music (Afrobeat) will still continue to win more fans in the coming year

What I find most interesting is that the people of Europe and America especially the youths are responding positively to other kinds of music other than what they are used too

Mats Gustafsson

PHOTO OF MATS GUSTAFSSON GORAN GUSTAFSSON

Brandon Labelle
Georges Bataille said somewhere "I am a flea in the blowtorch of History" Reflecting upon 1999 I feel the same way That is, between January and now exists a plethora of Stimulating-Intense-Wonderful experiences shows seen and sounds heard, people met and thoughts exchanged, walks and drives and sleepless nights all of which contribute to a sense that 'it was a good year!' A personal highlight was recently seeing three installations in Berlin by the artist Rolf Julius whose intimate and provocative sound-works retain a subtle relationship to the 'exterior', to that which lies outside the interior space of 'music' 1) speakers suspended inside a dilapidated brick church (sounds of distant birds, bells and reverberant drones) 2) a window, a garden, a view, sounds from an imaginary landscape? or the real world 3) a quiet work in a record store, the 'sound-colours' of yellow and black conversing with rain pattering against a window Julius's work operates with very simple and unassuming means, yet it draws attention to itself through a deeply sensitive interaction with a given space His works are more about 'placement' than 'installation' — in viewing-listening to the work one can not ignore the broader 'placement' of things and forces, the interactions that constitute a surrounding environment

Matmos
Top meeting so many of our personal musical heroes and co-conspirators while on tour in UK/Europe and the US, housepainting with Rachel's, recording surgery in operating rooms and silence in anechoic chambers, Drifting onstage at Union Chapel, improvisations in New York with Lesser and Lucky Kitchen, celebrating our seventh year as a band/etc

Live seeing Cosey play guitar, People Like Us/Wobbly/Jet Black Hair People threeway radio freakout on KALX Berkeley, Pajo's saunter offstage while the guitars kept ringing, Labradford by lightning, Pita and Dean Roberts on the boat in Paris, Enslaved at Lucifer's Hammer SF, Cat Power

Artefacts Coil *Musick To Play in the Dark*, LB's *Pop Artificielle*, Vladislav Delay *Ele*, Ae *EP7*, NWW *An Awkward Pause*, Gas *Konigsforst*, The Mimic And The Model, Bjork + Chris Cunningham, Jake Mandell's laptop, Stephen Burt's book *Popular Music*, Supersilent, Hrvatski, FAQT vs Ricci, *Merge* mag, Richard Chartier, Jaxx in the van, Lexaunculpt's tour CD-R, Mouse On Mars, *Mod 'N' Trans 4*

Down with Remixes, Up with Collaboration we had/are having fun working with Slicker, Bjork, Tony Labat/Ana Novakov, Keenan Lawler and Rachel's

Forthcoming and Fabulous People Like Us *The Thermos Explorer*, Delarosa and Asora on Schematic, Kid 606's remix gangbang, Pan American

Bummers saying yes to too many good things and then missing deadlines/disappointing friends, people who drown out quiet music at shows, misplaced CD-Rs, the death of multiple hard drives, missing Sonar, Skip Spence's death

Improvisation

John Butcher & Phil Durrant Secret Measures (Wobbly Rail)
Evan Parker & Georg Gräwe Unity Variations (Okka Disk)
Polwechsel Polwechsel 2 (Hat Art)
Supersilent Supersilent 4 (Rune Grammafon)
John Butcher/Phil Durrant/John Russell The Scenic Route (Emanem)
Evan Parker & Derek Bailey Arch Duo (Rastascan)
VHF Extracts (Erstwhile)
Evan Parker Electro-Acoustic Ensemble Drawn Inward (ECM)
MIMEO Movement In Electronic Music Orchestra (Perdition Plastics)
Powerfield Electronic Electric Electronic (Paratactile)
Derek Bailey Playbacks (Bingo)
Such The Issue At Hand (Matchless)
Mats Gustafsson The Education Of Lars Jerry (Xeric)
Dominic Duval & The CT String Quartet The Navigator (Leo)
Dorgon & William Parker Broken/Circle (Jumbo)

Jazz

Isotope 217° Utonian_Automatic (Thrill Jockey)
Dave Douglas Tiny Bell Trio Songs For Wandering Souls (Winter & Winter)
William Parker & In Order To Survivie The Peach Orchard (AUM Fidelity)
Chicago Underground Trio Possible Cube (Delmark)
Die Like A Dog Quartet Little Birds Have Fast Hearts (FMP)
Alan Silva & William Parker A Hero's Welcome: Pieces For Rare Occasions (Eremite)
Paul Plimley Trio Safe Crackers (Victo)
Nels Cline & Greg Bendian Interstellar Space Revisited (Atavistic)
Odean Pope Trio Ebioto (Knitting Factory)
Sunny Murray & Sabir Mateen Sunny Murray & Sabir Mateen (Eremite)
Roscoe Mitchell & The Note Factory Nine To Get Ready (ECM)
Charles Gayle 3 Abiding Variations (FMP)
What We Live Quartet For A Day (Winter & Winter)
Guillermo Gregorio Trio Red Cube(d) (Hatology)
The Vandermark 5 Simpatico (Atavistic)

Low End

Mos Def Black On Both Sides (Rawkus)
Handsome Boy Modelling School So... How's Your Girl (Tommy Boy)
DJ Vadim USSR Life From The Other Side (Ninja Tune)
Krust Coded Language (Talkin' Loud)
Blackalicious Nia (Mo' Wax)
Quannum Spectrum (Mo' Wax)
Public Enemy There's A Poison Goin' On (Atomic Pop)
Sensational Corner The Market (Wordsound)
Aphrodite Aphrodite (V2)
Company Flow Little Johnny From The Hospital (Rawkus)
Prince Paul A Prince Among Thieves (Tommy Boy)
Swollen Members Balance (Battle Axe)
The Isolationist The Isolationist (Jazz Fudge)
Dr Doom First Come, First Served (Copasetik)
Material Intonarumori (Axiom)

▶ on stage The birth of Tamizdat RPM Seeing AMM live for the first time The Monastery of Sound Festival in Normandy Dr Nina Simone at Meltdown The sterling work of Ed and Phil at the LMC. Saburo Teshigawara dancing to Merzbow at the Hayward Gallery Waldemar Bastos's free show at Borders. The good people of Cologne (thank you) Daniel Miller's set at Sonar Lucio Fontana at the Hayward and Ana Mana Pacheco at the National Gallery Missy Misdemeanour Elliot when words fail me
Cons People who don't understand that the views expressed in *The Wire* are those of the respective contributors and not necessarily shared by the magazine or its staff
DANIELA GARGIULO

Pros John Cale at RFH and rediscovering his *Eat/Kiss* in its wake For a closely associated Con, see below The Creatures at Shepherd's Bush Empire and revelling in that Banshee dance Nick Cave's anatomy of a love song at a solo South Bank event that predated his Meltdown in June/July Taking up residence at the South Bank for Meltdown, The Bad Seeds were monumental and, in his own *Rede/Speech* event, Blixa Bargeld charmed the cosmos into a tape loop Intelligent fun The Divine David's destructive cabaret at the Royal Vauxhall Academy of Arts. *The Crime Of Sheila McGough*, the new book by America's best critic, Janet Malcolm
Cons John Cale at the ICA Awful arrangements and lacklustre event lose all brownie points gained at above The fates that programmed concerts by Patti Smith, Meltdown Harry Smith Tribute finale and a Philosophical Tournament from Bargeld on the same evening
LOUISE GRAY

Pros Discoveries Frank Denyer, maverick British composer with a rare CD on Etcetera, *Finding Refuge In The Remains*, Horatiu Radulescu, Romanian spectralist whose Piano Concerto *The Quest* appeared on CPO Gig of the year Andrew Cyrille Trio with James Newton and Lisle Atkinson, Newcastle Corner House Vancouver based Songlines label — releases by Jerry Granelli and Chris Speed — showcased some of the finest jazz on the planet. Outer limits of bad taste Chris Newman's masturbatory *Six Sick Songs* (Review) spills its seed in some unlikely venues.
Cons A bad year for crossover confections. Wynton Marsalis's egregious eight CD set for the millennium ended up offering turkeys for Christmas instead, Joe Jackson launches his Symphony No 1 — maybe No 9 will be choral Good to see the scepticism confronting Turner Prize entrants, an exercise in imperial nudity that's hopefully imploding Looking forward to a millennial return to honest-to-goodness modernism
ANDY HAMILTON

Pros Much evidence of the continuing influence of filmmaker/alchemist/shit disturber Harry Smith *Think Of The Self Speaking* (Elbow/Cityfull Press) crammed full of adversarial interviews and free range thinking, Smith's *Anthology Of American Folk Music* providing a wellspring of inspiration for new work from The Holy Modal Rounders and Van Dyke Parks to Spooky and others in the Ambient fringes Both volumes of Ragnar Johnson's *Sacred Flute Music Of New Guinea*, first heard on David Toop's Quartz label and presumed beyond collectable at this point, now available from Rounder Yes! Also, *The Raga Guide* appeared, an indispensable labour of love
Cons Augustus Pablo died For my own listening, I am haunted by a line George Melly once wrote to describe The Beatles' psychedelic phase, "They show little enthusiasm for the way we live now"
RICHARD HENDERSON

Pros Dining with German space master Peter Thomas and being presented with a signed copy of the sheet music for his main title theme to *Raumpatrouille*, watching Karlheinz Stockhausen repair a light fitting at his home in Kürten, the Chamber of Pop Culture getting it on and doing it right (yet again) with live appearances by Jimi Tenor, Coop and Kozik, Billy Chainsaw's DJ set at Revolution ('Mary Bell! Child of Hell!'), the nitro-injected madness of Top Fuel drag racing at Santa Pod (if God created anything louder, He's keeping it quiet), Lee Hazlewood at the Royal Festival Hall doing a slow, dirty version of "Whole Lotta Shakin' Goin On", then getting the entire audience to applaud his music publishers, Godflesh at the Garage, and the swirling crimson and gold dance floor of the Paloma ballroom in Barcelona
KEN HOLLINGS

Pros A year of tours/trips abroad (Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Copenhagen, Reykjavik, Dublin, Budapest, Belgium, Barcelona, Amsterdam), four insane days at Sonar, AMM at Waterloo, Evil Moisture in Brixton, audience participation and improvised five-deck mixing at Diskono's inaugural Verbrechen night in Glasgow; an excellent year for electronix, including the continuing emergence of a diverse underground US scene — Crank, Kid 606, Hrvatski, Lucky Kitchen, Phthalocyanine, Schematic, etc; and growth of global DIY/post-media networks. New artists and a prolific, fresh burst of creativity from Chain Reaction Gustav Metzger at Oxford's MoMA, *Moving Cities* and Lucio Fontana exhibitions at the Hayward Gallery; Pierro Manzoni at the Serpentine, *Break/Flow* and *Dotcode* zines.
Cons Name-droppers, self-publicists, egotists, clones, copyists and fashion sheep Music industry idiots/bullshit Relegation and continuing misery for Bristol City Failure to get out a new issue of *Obsessive Eye* The Designers Republic Deadlines and edits.
DAVE HOWELL

Pros New York with my brother, NNCK live in Tribeca, on the roof of Aum Fidelity HQ Kerouac/Dylan sightseeing, interviewing Nick Cave & live in Edinburgh, all-night summit/interview with Kevin Shields in Clapton, leaving London at last, back in Glasgow, rainy Dumbarton Road by night, new flat, the Salute! squad, Dorgon & Laura, Maher Shalal Hash Baz live in Glasgow, Rachel & Gavin, Telstar Ponies back in action, Joe Budenholzer/new Backworld CD, Yah Ho Wha box, David Tibet, Coil, interviewing David S Ware & Quartet live in London, Underground Exposure/Session In Scotland, Borbetomagus as flatmates/drinking partners, ATR live, Bill Wells Trio, Dylan bootleg lifeline, *Astronauts* mag, Ugly Things, Reading Emerson's *Self-Reliance*, Claire & Trisha, Dave Douglas Tiny Bell Trio live, Acid Mothers/Pastels/Volcano/Phantom live on the banks of Loch Lomond, Bardo Pond live in Glasgow Stephen & Katrina, Raymond Prior's sitar ragas, Daniel, Nick, Aaron & Lawrence, Phantom Orchestra live on *Mixing It*, Ponies/Appendix Out folk-jam night good riddance to bad rubbish, dad still singing Perry Como
Cons Dave Conway turned psycho-stalker, ultra-conservative Scottish jazz mafia, bad week in Belfast, meeting John Fahey, still constantly up against it with uptight media-squares, not easy to feed a crippling vinyl habit in Glasgow, too goddamn busy, end of the century, a thousand dead ends, not enough cons to gripe about this year
DAVID KEENAN

Pros Visiting Paul Panhuysen in Eindhoven and finally getting to see Het Apollohuis, even though it's no longer used for concerts Interviewing Steve Reich in Paris, even though there were press attachés everywhere Discovering the work of sound artists ECM 323, even though I had to trek all the way out to Deptford to see it. Conversing with DJ Spooky in a Paris bar Seeing The Laptop Orchestra (aka Peter Rehberg and Buro) perform at the Museum of Modern Art in Paris sitting in a row behind their laptops, they were an unforgettable sight. M Behrens and Francisco Lopez's Paris gig The excellent Musiques En Scène exhibition in Lyon, which included installations by Alvin Lucier, Paul DeMarinis, Nam June Paik, ▼

Will Oldham
People might like to hear recordings by Kyle Field from this year, and by the Ensemble Hotel de la Place de Jacmel, which is a Haitian group that performs at this hotel, and a recording was made by Richard Fleming People should wish they had seen/heard Sweet Jamz perform, and should see Slayer if they get the chance, and Mike Watt And then some old music that people ought to try to find includes a recording of Tom Cora and Catherine Jauniaux from a record store in New York in 1989, also the first Diamanda Galas record, and the singles of Rick Sabo This is not all easy music to find, but it's really good

Jim O'Rourke

Jim O'Rourke
99 was a big blur, but I did get to be knocked out of the haze by some stuff Jordan Knight "Give It To You", Nobukazu Takemura live at Liquid Room in Tokyo, Autechre's *EP7*, The Flaming Lips *The Soft Bulletin*, Rochappie *New Chappie*, Gush *Live In Tampere*, Cher *Believe*, Angus Maclise, Papa M *Live From A Shark Cage*, all Boredoms, Roy Harper live at Dingwalls, reissue of Mike McGear *McGear* reissue of all those Davey Graham records, Peter Brotzmann Tentet at Victoriaville, Pita live at the Cooler, Kevin Drumm *Second* a sign written by the buyer at Tower Records in Shinjuku next to the Stockhausen *Helicopter String Quartet* saying "Don't buy this record", Bob Zmuda, *Andy Kaufmann Exposed*, *I'm Alan Partridge*, Miho Asahi *Thrill March*, aw hell there's a lot of stuff And of course Cyndi Lauper

Charlemagne Palestine
as this is the end of the century i'm a bit spooked
i don't know if i dread the 2000 to come or crave it
certainly i haven't any choice
sometimes i think about nostradamus these days
everyday i listen to the radio and
bbbbbbaaaaaaaddddd news is all i hear
what's it going to be like on the other side?
what will we want to see and hear and do?
this end of the century everyone was real nice to remember who i was and am
and to honour me thank you all
but now for the new millennium i want to be a child again
and do things i've never done
visit places i've never been
meet people i've never known
and make things i never thought i could
if that's possible then i look forward to participate in this new century
on our heels with vim and vigour
good luck to everyone in the transition
let's tell nostradamus to stick it up his ass and try to make the best of all that awaits us ON THE OTHER SIDE!

Stefan Betke (Pole)
The last 12 months Pros have been mostly for me time travel experiences, plus of course a couple of records and concerts I was really impressed by snd's *makesnd cassette* — really cool minimal style as I love it. I enjoyed Flanger (Bernd Friedmann/Atom Heart) which was a kind of jazz experience combined with elements out of a freakshow Really enjoyed discovering Vladislav Delay — impressive young musician Could be getting really interesting next year together with Jan Jellinek's Farben featuring The Dramatiques And for sure Kit Clayton, my favourite release on Scape–Music beside Burnt Friedmann And The Nu Dub Players I didn't have real Cons, but I was surprised and shocked how easily people can make really bad jokes on really cool people without thinking about the results Stupid The worst thing was seeing my equipment getting damaged during flights or getting stuck in the city I played the day before

Genesis P-Orridge
Pro There are two major evolutionary threads that I believe are inevitable during the next millennium First, the end of the current, but redundant, physical manifestation of what in terms of our consciousness is still a primitive larval stage of our species Second, a recognition that consciousness is a separate yet coexistent entity dwelling symbiotically from within the body A major shift in perceptual and, by metaphor, consensus reality will occur leading to a new consciousness that is interdimensional and mutable at will
Con There will be a new 'dark age' of plague, war, famine and fear with the logos of huge corporations becoming the banners of aggressive neo–feudal warlords

Eddie Prévost (AMM)
99 rewind — a few moments in the year when
I finally had to own up that I know less and less about who and what *The Wire* writes about
I go (for the last time?) on a potty Arts Council Touring Scheme tour with my trio

Eddie Prévost

(Tom Chant and John Edwards) together with Veryan Weston — playing along the way in Mick Beck's front room, Leeds Courtroom No 1, and The Jacqueline Du Pre Centre to two men and a dog (figuratively speaking and with respect to the warm audiences we had)
Spectacles fell to pieces at Gatwick Arrived more myopic than usual in Canada hoping that I would be recognised Then couldn't sleep for two nights because

Genesis P-Orridge

PHOTOS JIM O ROURKE JULIAN ANDERSON EDDIE PREVOST ANDREW POTHECARY GENESIS P-ORRIDGE FRANK BAUER

Modern Classical

Luciano Berio Sequenzas (Deutsche Grammaphon)
Jonathan Harvey Le Tombeau De Messiaen (Sargasso)
Charlemagne Palestine Schlingen-Blängen (New World)
Hans Eisler Hollywood Songbook (Decca)
Robert Ashley Your Money My Life Goodbye (Lovely Music)
Paul Panhuysen Lost For Words (Table Of The Elements)
John Wall Constructions I-IV (Utterpsalm)
Iannis Xenakis Kraanerg (Etcetra)
Toru Takemitsu Quotation Of Dream (Deutsche Grammophon)
Terry Fox Ataraxia (Plate Lunch)
Günter Steinke Streichtrio (Wergo)
Cornelius Cardew Treatise (Hat[Now]Art)
Morton Feldman Coptic Light (Argo)
Steve Reich Phase Patterns (Wergo)
Henry Cowell Mosaic (Mode)

Outer Limits

Angus MacLise The Invasion Of Thunderbolt Pagoda (Siltbreeze/Quakebasket)
Sonic Youth Goodbye 20th Century (Smells Like/SYR)
Maryanne Amacher Sound Characters (Tzadik)
Nihilist Spasm Band Every Monday Night (Alchemy)
Stephen Vitiello The Light Of Falling Cars (JdK)
Pierre Bastien Musiques Paralloidres (Lowlands)
Coil Musick To Play In The Dark Vol 1 (Chalice)
ISO ISO (Alcohol)
Adam Bohman Music And Words (Paradigm)
Purple Trap Decided. . (Tzadik)
Eugene Chadbourne Worms With Strings (Leo)
Rafael Toral Aerial Frequency (Perdition Plastics)
Jack Smith Silent Shadows On Cinemarce Island: 56 Ludlow Street 1962-64 Vol 2 (Audio Artkive)
Achim Wollscheid Airs (Ritornell)
Kevin Drumm Second (Perdition Plastics)

Compilations A-Z

Blip Bleep (Lucky Kitchen)
Certified Dope Vol 3 (Wordsound)
Collision Course (PIAS)
Deeper Concentration (Om)
Depth Charge Presents Electro Boogie (Studio K7)
Doob Doob O'Rama: Film Songs From Bollywood (Normal)
Electronic Music From Buenos Aires (Trium)
Enforcers: Deadly Chambers Of Sound (Reinforced)
Ethiopiques Vol 5: Tigrina Music 1970-75 (Buda Musique)
GS I Love You Too (Big Beat)
Highways Over Gardens (Carpet Bomb)
Ho! Roady Music From Vietnam (Trikont)
In Memoriam Max Brand (Rhiz)
Love Comes Shining Over The Mountain (Rune Grammofon)
Love, Peace & Poetry Vol 3 (Normal)
Mash The Place Up (Ambush)
Microscopic Sound (Caipirinha)
Modulation & Transformation 4 (Mille Plateaux)
The Raga Guide (Nimbus)
The Real HipHop: The Best Of D&D Studios Vol 1 (Cold Front/K-Tel International)
The Roots Of Gamelan (World Arbiter)
Sub Rosa Vs Kompakt (Sub Rosa)
Superrapin' (Groove Attack)
Turntable Solos (Amoebic)
Warp 10+2: Classics (Warp)

▶ La Monte Young and Fluxus artist Joe Jones Pierre Henry at La Cigale Experiencing the New York music scene firsthand, from Roulette through to Tonic and the Kitchen Arnold Dreyblatt's *From The Archives* exhibit in Berlin
Cons The massacres in East Timor The sorry state of Berlin, where office blocks and government buildings are erasing the traces of the past Missing Ars Electronica and Phonotaktik The millennium bug The millennium celebrations
RAHMA KHAZAM

Pros Small pleasurable discoveries throughout the year — Patrick Heron's 195Ds Ab Ex paintings, collages by Richard Meier and Dan Fern, a new edition of Tom Phillips's brilliant poetry/painting book *A Humument*, more involvement in the making of music and art, writing
Cons Writing
ART LANGE

Pros 'Broken Beats' the West London-based axis of People/Mainsqueeze/2000 Black/Archive and Dynamite Joint Records, who are creating the most innovative strain of dance music around Jazzanova — producers/remixers/compilers of the year Talkin Loud — the most consistent label of 99 HipHop — THE best year in living memory Dance music producers finally embracing the spirits of their source material, rather than merely plundering it shorthand the perfect example — Ubiquity's excellent New Latinaires series *The Blair Witch Project* — believe the hype My first holiday abroad in four years Watching my wife graduate — again
Cons The ongoing dumbing-down of dance music journalism HipHop albums — why must they be so long? Drum 'n' bass — not dead yet, but marking time just isn't good enough The D Angelo album — another year, another no-show The Wu-Tang Playstation game — how 'real' is that? The Tony Blair Projects — don't believe the hype The death of Stanley Kubrick Tracey Emin (now that is a con!)
PETER McINTYRE

Pros Voice of 99 Macy Gray — sometimes a voice comes slamming out of nowhere and reinvents your ears where can this love child of Blossom Dearie and Ann Peebles have been hiding all this time? Singles of 99 Groove Armada's "At The River" (for its sluggish bliss) Basement Jaxx's "Red Alert" (for that road drill on helium synth noise), Britney Spears's "Baby One More Time" (for its machine-tooled precision) Chill of 99 Norma Waterson's version of Nick Drake's "River Man", which sounds like what you might hear the night before the morning you die Thrills of 99 finding out I wasn't the only person in the world who loves The Jimmy Castor Bunch's "Hey Leroy, Your Mama's Calling", and finally locating a copy of Big Youth's "Touch Me In The Morning", the most intoxicatingly preposterous cover version ever made
Cons Meridian TV taking off *Prisoner Cell Block H* the success of Travis, the charts going 'Latin' (even sofa shop ads have gone salsa) Dirk Bogarde dying
ANDY MEDNURST

Pros A year of constant travel, taking in several fantastic festivals, and individual shows Misha Mengelberg and Mark Dresser's solo sets at Guelph Ontario Jazz Festival Barre Phillips, Tobias Delius Quartet and Vinny Golia Large Ensemble at Vancouver Du Maurier Jazz Festival Michael Zerang's Jumper Cables and Peter Brotzmann's 11 piece group at Chicago's Empty Bottle Festival Fire In The Valley, and Time Flies-Vancouver Festival Scott Fields/Jason Roebke/Francois Houle and Guillermo Gregorio/Fred Lonberg-Holm/Carrie Biola double bill in Madison Tom Waits in Minneapolis Ken Vandermark being awarded a MacArthur grant The continual emphasis on small labels to document improvised music
Cons Nearing its fifth decade too much time is still being spent arguing whether or not improvised music is legitimate Retro-swing and Latin pop The inability of major labels to document interesting music More bad concept albums Susie Ibarra leaving both David S Ware's group and William Parker's In Order To Survive Insomnia Horrible flights that never seem to run on time
JON C MORGAN

Pros Meeting Iggy Pop in the flesh in Miami Being given the opportunity by Ciara Nolan at EMI to perform my *Dead Duck Live* monstrosity at the ICA Finally scoring copies of *Strange Strings* by Sun Ra And His Astro Infinity Arkestra and *Vampire State Building* by Alcatraz John Fahey's concert at the QEH Hooking up with Michael Hurley The Straight Story The news that the guy who invented Beanie Babies has decided to End Bear it all Deerfield, Mass Boxhill Miami Beach Santa Pod Abstinence
Cons The usual depressing major record company swineherd mentality *Yellow Submarine* flashback Flat Eric Being caught in an earthquake while shopping for records in Athens, Greece Too many anal retentive record dealers The non-appearance of Extreme's long promised 5D CD Merzbow box (again) *The Blair Witch Project* The passing of Louis 'Moondog' Hardin, Grateful Dead tape archivist Dick Latvala and Claude 'Kickboy Face' Bessy
EDWIN POUNCEY

Pros Riding on top of the Filhos de Gandhy truck in Bahia's carnaval with Caetano Veloso and Gilberto Gil, Merle Haggard and The Strangers casually brilliant performance at Town Hall, NYC, Philadelphia's ongoing tradition of producing great jazz musicians — most recently Orrin Evans, Reid Anderson, and Rodney Green, Nasheet Waits's drumming black music, juggernaut-like, absorbing not only Metal (Candna's finely tooled, funky, jazz-influenced thing) but Country too (Garth Brooks's underrated Chris Gaines record), Christopher Small's final dispatch on the reification of musical performance, 'Musicking' King Henry
Cons The infantile critical tradition of calling something you don't like 'conservative', Mayor Giuliani, the disappearance of Times Square Record Mart
BEN RATLIFF

Pros Position Normal's *Stop Your Nonsense Faust Tapes* multiplied by Saint Etienne divided by Native Hipsters' "There Goes Concorde Again" equals my fave LP of 1999 Two-step Garage's one-way alliance with American R&B the bootleg remix craze that transformed Brandy, Monica and Whitney into London underground divas Too many fabulous two-step tunes, but special shout to the Abigail's Party-sampling "I Don't Smoke" by DJ Dee Kline Shame about the rappers' thugged-out 'false consciousness', but hail the rhythmatic invention and bizarrely rave-like riffs of auteur-producers Swizz Beatz (Eve's "What Ya Want" and "Gotta Man", Jay-Z's "Girl's Best Friend"), Mannie Fresh (LPs by Lil Wayne, BG, Hot Boys, Juvenile), She'kspere (Destiny's Child's "Bills" and "Bugaboo", TLC's "No Scrubs") Electrofunkadelia Ja Rule's "Holla Holla", Aphex Twin's "Windowlicker", Super_Collider's *Head On*, director Hype Williams's Deleuzian delirium in Busta Rhymes's "What's It Gonna Be?!" video, DJ Assault blitzing booty in New York, Basement Jaxx rocking a boat on the Hudson River Overdazzling everything, our son Kieran
Cons English language music discourse at its lowest ebb since 1985, rock auto-cannibalising its own necrotic myth-flesh, margins deadlocked, dance in a dry spell The millennium really should have come in 94, because it's been the lamest, least apocalyptic year in memory (not just sonically, but across the books/TV/film/etc spectrum) Is this the whimper that announces a terminal-yet-interminable heat-death for pop culture? Or the 1975-style doldrum before the storm?
SIMON REYNOLDS ▼

my room overlooks the all night bus station Demand to be moved

But there were one or two good moments in a year that has been relatively quiet for me Would you believe AMM only performed three times this year! But Matchless Recordings goes quietly from strength to strength And I made some new friends (mostly in Canada and the USA where I met a lot of enthusiastic young people who make the future of the music look brighter than it appears to me at the moment) I also learned to cherish some of my old friends more Maybe things will get better

By the way, I also had (have) a bad back.

Royal Trux

Royal Trux

Pro Rave culture (American-style) fully saturates the mainstream

Con Nothing changes

Pro Younger generation learns about the awesome sacrifices made by the kids of the WW2 era

Con Professor Spielberg

Pro Country music sweeps the United States, bigger than ever

Con Merle Haggard does not look good in a leather mini-skirt.

Pro Continued expansion of Internet activity further isolates many contact-and-cleave humans

Con They now gather in virtual worlds where they can be fully monitored by authorities

Pro Phony rock 'n roll almost completely dead

Con Phony HipHop spreading faster than phony golf

Pro RTX finds decent coffee in Texarkana, Texas

Con It is sold inside a massive discount-bookstore featuring 12 shelves of Ronald Reagan biographies

Pro Matt Drudge hits the airwaves

Con Too much Walter Winchell, not enough Bob and Ray

Pro Fashion industry adopts rock 'n' roll style as counterculture reference

Con Fashion industry believes Shirley Manson IS rock 'n' roll

Pro More bands selling their songs to big corporations for use in television commercials

Con In spite of this, these bands still feel impelled to release records and tour

Pro Millennium-fever consciousness grips the United States

Con What about next year?

DJ Vadim

This has probably been the most stressful and hardest working year I've had to date in the music industry but also one of the most rewarding I have released two LPs this year — *The Isolationist*, and *USSR Life From The Other Side*, plus an instrumental LP of *USSR*, two singles, one video clip, plus several remixes In putting together our first proper UK/Europe Jazz Fudge Tour with Swollen Members, Task Force, Mr Thing, Killer Kela and myself, we have reached new audiences abroad, built many bridges and spread the gospel about UK HipHop The Russian Percussion tour with Blu Rum 13, Killer Kela, Mr Thing and myself was the first time I have performed 'live' and look forward to developing this project, adding double bass, percussion but ultimately based around the turntables Other highlights include playing to 5000 people at the HipHop day at Glastonbury, DJing in front of 25,000 people in Revolution Square Moscow as part of a HipHop festival, gigs in Tokyo, Sydney, The Dogstar in Brixton, Brighton with DJ Krush, Edinburgh with All Natural, Montpelier with Co Flow and Mr Lif

All in all, things creatively, musically seem to be becoming less misty in my search 'for the perfect beat' There has been some incredible music come out including a storming Ed Rush & Optical LP (plus anything on Virus/Renegade Hardware), Photek's return, Co-Flow, Dilated Peoples LP, Divine Styler, Mike Ladd, Shinju Gumi, Mark B, RYU, Task Force and hearing The Scratch Perverts win the World DMC Championships On top of all I found the love of my life — Yarah Bravo

Otomo Yoshihide

Book Yamamoto Seichi/*Ginga* Yamamoto is a guitarist from Boredoms and Omoide-Hatoba, and he just released book including his essay poem and novel, I love it very much, I read it with big laugh then after that something deeply happen in my brain, great one concerts Mego at ICC in Tokyo with Ryoji Ikeda, Merzbow, Filament, Akiyma Tetsuji, Taku Sugimoto, Nakamura Toshimaru and Sachiko M live at Bar Aoyama in Tokyo

Ring Ring Festival 1999 lots of musican join and made concert around the world without any commercal reason, that was great. Metamkine, Voice Crack & Gunter Muller at Musique Action (that was 98 but still strongly influence me on 99), never forget. Film *Kwaidan* (reissue from 60s, music by Toru Takemitsu) CD Phew & Yamamoto Seichi/*shiyawase no sumika*

SACHIKO M 3" solo on FMN Sound Factory Records Chrisitian Marclay *Record Without A Cover* (reissue)

Otomo Yoshihide

Bad things I didn't finish Derek Bailey remix that I really want to make Good things start new jazz quintet, keep ISO and Filament Released CD Yoshihide Otomo plays music of Takeo Yomashita I worked with CD reissue of Steve Beresford — *The Bath Of Surprise* (my favourite record of the 80s) It will be out in Deccember on Amoebic (check Japanese Improvisors Website *www2 gol com/users/miyuki/*)

DJ Vadim

PHOTO OF OTOMO YOSHIHIDE EVA VERMANDEL

Reissues A-Z

Mahmoud Ahmed Ere Mela Mela (Buda Musique)
David Behrman Wave Train (Alga Marghen)
Arthur Blythe Lennox Avenue Breakdown (Koch)
Butthole Surfers Rembrandt Pussyhorse (Latino Bugger Veil)
John Coltrane The Classic Quartet: The Complete Impulse! Studio Recordings (Impulse!)
The Fall Dragnet (Cog Sinister/Voiceprint)
Fennesz Fennesz Plays (Moikai)
Luc Ferrari Interrupteur/Tautologos 3 (Blue Chopsticks)
Henry Cow Unrest (ReR)
King Tubby Dub Like Dirt (Blood And Fire)
Krzysztof Komeda Knife In The Water (Power Bros)
Fela Kuti Box 1 & 2 (Barclay)
Richard Maxfield/Harold Budd The Oak Of The Golden Dreams (New World)
Mbuti Pygmies On The Edge Of The Ituri Forest 1952 (SWP)
Meat Puppets Meat Puppets II (Rykodisc)
Moroccan Brotherhood Of Jilala Jilala (Baraka/Akasha)
Os Mutantes Os Mutantes (Om Platten)
The Necks Aquatic (Carpet Bomb)
Non Pagan Muzak (Mute)
Tony Oxley Four Compositions For Sextet (Columbia)
Evan Parker Monoceros (Chronoscope)
Taj Mahal Travellers August 1974 (P-Vine)
Terry Riley Reed Streams/Mantra (Organ Of Corti)
Max Romeo Open The Iron Gate (Blood And Fire)
Ray Russell Rites And Rituals (Columbia)
Skip Spence Oar (Sundazed)
Spontaneous Music Ensemble Low Profile (Emanem)
Suicide Suicide 2 (Blast First)
Television The Blow Up (ROIR)
U Roy The Lost Album: Right Time Rockers (Sound System)

This year's charts were compiled from the votes of the following contributors (each contributor's individual record of the year is shown in brackets): Steve Barker (Argan [illegible] *Moroccan Motor Berber*) Clive Bell (Innerzone [illegible] *Programmed*) Chris Blackford (Peter Hammill *Typical*) [illegible] Cowley (NM Pengn *44'38"/5*) Christoph Cox (MIMEO [illegible] *In Movement Electronic Orchestra*) Alan Cummings ([illegible] Beefheart & The Magic Band *Grow Fins*) Brian Duguid (Lamb *Fear Of Fours*) David Elliott (To Rococo Rot *The Amateur View*) Daniela Gargiulo (Anto Lindsay *Prize*) Louise Gray (The Birthday Party *Live*) Andy Hamilton (Jerry Granelli & Badlands *Enter, A Dragon*) Richard Henderson (Mbuti Pygmies *On The Edge Of The Ituri Forest*) Tony Herrington (Supersilent *Supersilent 4*) Ben House (The Fall *The Marshall Suite*) David Howell (Monolake *Interstate*) David [illegible] (Coil *Musick To Play In The Dark*) Rahma Khazam (Mouse On Mars *Nun Niggung*) Biba Kopf (Coil *Musick To Play In The Dark*) Art Lange (Evan Parker Electro-Acoustic Ensemble *Drawn Inward*) Peter McIntyre (Nitin Sawhney *Second Skin*) Will Montgomery (Evan Parker Electro-Acoustic Ensemble *Drawn Inward*) Anne Hilde Neset (Coil *Musick To Play In The Dark*) Tim Owen (Matmos *The West*) Edwin Pouncey (Charlemagne Palestine *Schlingen-Blängen*) Tom Ridge (*Low Secret Nurse*) Simon Reynolds (Position Normal *Stop Your Nonsense*) Mike Shallcross (The Martian *CBH 625 1876: A Red Planet Compilation*) Peter Shapiro (Basement Jaxx *Remedy*) Philip Sherburne (Autechre *LP5*) Mark Sinker (MIMEO *Music In Movement Electronic Orchestra*) David Toop (David Sylvian *Dead Bees On A Cake*) Ben Watson (Evil Dick *Cobra Phagism*) Don Watson (Stereolab *Cobra Phases Group Play Voltage In The Milky Night*) Douglas Wolk (The Magnetic Fields *69 Love Songs*) Rob Young (Coil *Musick To Play In The Dark*)

▶ *Pros* Live performances from Acid Mothers Temple, Six By Seven and Patti Smith, *The Thin Red Line*, *The Idiots*, *Felicia's Journey*; reissues/compilations from Blood And Fire and Pressure Sounds, stoner rock, *The Sopranos*, *Homicide*, *Big Train*, Richard Wentworth's *Thinking Aloud* exhibition, Glasgow in January, *Karoo* by Richard Tesich, Foundry Recordings, my wife (as always)
Cons Not getting out and about nearly enough, the day job, cargo pants, anything remotely connected to *Star Wars*; mediocre films, bad guitar groups, sycophancy, *fin de siècle* tedium, my increasing inability to cope with large quantities of alcohol
TOM BIDGE

Pros May Day in Havana, the Afro-Germanic sounds of Aux BB, Drexciya, Dopplereffekt and Remote's "The Swarm", abolition of hereditary peerage, no Oasis releases, a blistering year for Underground Resistance and a comeback for Transmat, Wim Wenders's *Buena Vista Social Club*, Jeff Mills and DJ Rolando at Lost, reading Frederick Exley, Dramatic Techno — Aztec Mystic's "Knights Of The Jaguar", the neo-rave of Spin's "Supercharged" and the re-availability of DJ Funk's "Run", Sami Hyppia — finally a decent Liverpool centre back.
Cons White House — the resistible rise of funkless trancers like Paul Van Dyk and Ferry Corsten and the spineless radio DJs who play them, the media love affair with the avaricious arrogance of Manchester United, the tragic death of DJ Kemistry
MIKE SHALLCROSS

Pros Competing in the World Air Guitar Championships, my complete set of white rapper trading cards courtesy of the only zine that matters, *Motorbooty*; *The Matrix*.
Cons Not winning the World Air Guitar Championships, my ever-increasing jadedness and ever-shortening attention span which I blame on the preponderance of whiny, drab rock (Warren DiMartini where are you?) and dance music which just makes me feel old and not young at heart, Rudy Giuliani
PETER SHAPIRO

Pros After a half year hiatus, finally relaunching *urbansounds.com*, Joshua Kit Clayton's brilliant laptop squall at the opening party. Heaning Danny Zelonky play back a 20-year old personal recording of an impromptu, beach-side nyabinghi performance, and experiencing intense temporal dislocation. Few shows for this stay-at-home, but Sankai Juku, Stefano Scodanibbio, Tom Ze and DJ Trace all provided memorable placemarkers in the year. Noton's *20' To 2000* breaking out of the stultified formats of electronic music. And finally, after years of narrow allegiance to geektronica, discovering and falling in love with House music
Cons With the exception of projects like Orang Orang and Falsch, which are actively extending the possibilities of the medium, MP3 mania continued to warp all discussion of 'the future of music', and threatens to obliterate the physical object once and for all
PHILIP SHERBURNE

Despite the distractions and irrelevancies of the millennium, every passing year emphasises how much this is a transitional period with no big bang and only questions, continual shocks and psychological disturbances to keep us off-centre. I can't begin to grasp what's going on or where the profound effects of new technologies and globalism will end up. That's a pro, being unpredictable, and a con, being bereft of big, satisfying statements or movements. It's a pro, since such uncertainty and technological change stimulates unforeseen fluctuating musical configurations at the margins, and a con, since most of them are emotionally shallow. There's some added effect of music in the mainstream centre being utter dreck right now. I can't see much of a future for live music in the, er, traditional sense, but the point of saying such a thing is to be proved wrong next year
DAVID TOOP

Pros Cecil Taylor and Max Roach wowing a packed house at the Barbican, Mad Pride, Evil Dick, Pence Eleven, Dallas Boner, Dogbiz, Ian Stonehouse — the present day esemplasm refuses to die! David King's *The Commissar Vanishes. The Falsification Of Photographs And Art In Stalin's Russia*, Brendan Burton's surreal listening party (when do we get another?), P11 + Diary live and livid at the Bull and Gate, Hession/Wilkinson/Fell + Jaworzyn in Cologne, Wojciech Konikiewicz leading a jam on "Jean Pierre" at the Akwarium, Warsaw; visiting Tony Oxley and Tutta Rutten in Viersen, the speed with which active socialists built a campaign against Nato's bombing of Yugoslavia, Esther's new job, Indonesian student unrest.
Cons Continued arms sales by UK Inc to global dictators, Nato bombing atrocities, the spineless manner well-off liberals find it convenient to credit the moralising bullshit spouted by Blair and Clinton, *London Review Of Books* not having the nerve to run a polemic against Roger Scruton's *Aesthetics Of Music*; Revenant not letting me write about *Grow Fins*; capitalism!
BEN WATSON

Pros The age of international networking offers new hope for significant minorities. Figures like Arto Lindsay, Mark Cunningham and Rhys Chatham still producing genuinely fresh and stimulating work, 20 years on. Oh and lots of fitba on the telly
Cons You're asking a Celtic supporter?
DON WATSON

Pros The reunion of Family Fodder. Masada live. The mindblowing Equal Interest. Death Metal festival bills as found prose poems. Stephen Burt's *Popular Music*. Charles Burnham and Cooper-Moore bellowing gospel at each other. Ida, live, quiet and gorgeous. John Darnielle's genuinely critical zine *Last Plane To Jakarta*. Monica Kendrick on the No Music Festival. The Bowlie Weekender. The realisation that there is vastly more wonderful music than I will ever hear
Cons Reflexive critic-bashing. The fact that it is often merited. HipHop spinning its wheels. Mainstream rock as ceaseless Altamont. Breakbeat burnout. 'Historically important' multi-disc bummers. My own pathetic nostalgia for indie rock circa 1992. The realisation that there is more wonderful music out there than I will ever hear
DOUGLAS WOLK

Pros Titans of song in London: John Cale, Lee Hazlewood. Tikiman, Fenn O'Berg, David Toop at Sonar; splendid diversity from Philip Jeck, Otomo Yoshihide, Thomas Brinkmann and Dave Davies at *The Wire*'s Turntablism night in Utrecht, Scion at same, Oval at Drifting, Supersilent, Tony Oxley and Edward Vesala at Kongsberg, Funkstorung at Current, AMM at the Warehouse, Otomo/Keith Rowe/Taku Sugimoto at the Spitz, Mouse On Mars at London Embassy Rooms. Labels: Kompakt, Mille Plateaux/Ritornell, Alga Marghen, Sonig, Traum, Playhouse, OR, Blue Chopsticks, Rune Grammofon, Barclay (Fela reissues), Hugh Tracey, Buda Musique. Kino: *Festen*, *The Idiots*, *Last Night*, *Black Cat White Cat*, *Hitler — A Film From Germany* (not new, but what the hell). Paper: *Wreckers Of Civilisation* — Simon Ford, *The Plato Papers* — Peter Ackroyd, *Liquid City* — Iain Sinclair/Marc Atkins, *Norwegian In Three Months* — Dorling Kindersley. Escape: Sougia, Lissos, and the rivers of Raki and Logan, Anselm Kiefer and Thor Heyerdahl in Oslo, bike, video recorder
Cons Negative discrimination (*Female Of The Species*, "Women respond to ") TV researchers. Out of memory
ROB YOUNG

EREMITE

RECENT RELEASES

ALAN SILVA & WILLIAM PARKER: A Hero's Welcome – Pieces For Rare Occasions (The Silva/Parker Duos Vol.1) *"Together, Silva and Parker play a music that is stunningly decisive and seamless, gorgeous and dramatic. It grooves like a motherfucker. . If only 'jazz' always sounded this succulent" (The Wire)* (CD. MTE 17)

MALCOLM GOLDSTEIN: Live At Fire In The Valley – Soundings I from Configurations In Darkness When The River Overflows/My Feet Is Tired, But My Soul Is Rested/Soundings II *perf: Malcolm Goldstein (solo violin, voice)* (CD: MTE 16)

GLENN SPEARMAN w. **RASHID BAKR & MATTHEW GOODHEART:** First And Last *recorded at the 1998 Fire In The Valley series, Glenn Spearman's last ever earth gig, performing or recording w. Glenn Spearman (tenor sax)/Rashid Bakr (drums)/ Matthew Goodheart (piano)* (CD MTE 15)

DIE LIKE A DOG QUARTET (PETER BRÖTZMANN/HAMID DRAKE ROY CAMPBELL/WILLIAM PARKER): From Valley To Valley *Peter Brötzmann (reeds)/ Roy Campbell (brass)/Hamid Drake (drums)/William Parker (bass)* (CD. MTE 18)

RAPHE MALIK/DENIS CHARLES/SABIR MATEEN/WILLIAM PARKER: ConSequences *Raphe Malik (trumpet) Denis Charles (drums)/Sabir Mateen (alto sax)/William Parker (bass)* (CD: MTE 13)

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sound check

In party mode: the New Year's selected albums and singles

- John Adams
- Derek Bailey & Han Bennink
- Blackalicious
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- Jeremy Boyle
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- Cornelius Cardew
- Wendy Carlos
- Hari Prasad Chaurasia & Shiv Kumar Sharma
- Che-SHIZU
- Chris Cutler & Thomas Dimuzio
- Mos Def
- Roger Doyle
- Bob Drake
- Fennesz
- Frontier
- Fushitsusha
- Grateful Dead
- Ground-Zero
- Gyaatees
- Percy Howard
- Jansen/Barbieri/Karn
- Steve Jansen & Yukihiro Takahashi
- June Of 44
- Richard H Kirk
- Adam Lane
- Gerard Malanga
- Russell Mills/Undark
- Pharaohe Monch
- Motor Totemist Guild
- Dneida
- Jim D'Rourke
- Osymyso
- Charlemagne Palestine
- Papa M
- People Under The Stairs
- Iggy Pop
- Ryuichi Sakamoto
- Salaryman
- Sand
- Science Group
- Richard Scott
- Sonic Youth
- DJ Speedranch ^ Jansky Noise
- Splinks
- Squarepusher
- David Sylvian
- Sun Ra
- Ken Vandermark
- Various Artists
- John Wall

Plus new compilations, reissues, avant rock, classical, critical beats, dub, electronica, global, hiphop, jazz and outer limits releases in brief

Han Bennink & Derek Bailey
When We're Smilin'
INCUS CD34 CD

Derek Bailey & Han Bennink
Air Mail Special
INCUS CD35 CD

The latest exchange from one of the longest running conversations in improvised music took place at a distance each of the musicians recorded a set of improvisations and then posted them to the other, who superimposed a response Instead of dialogues, then, the albums are more like monologues with copious commentary, some of it heckling The interesting thing about the recordings is that each musician takes a turn at coming second, so his adaptations to the other's playing only work one way As such the CDs deserve listening to back to back Numerous vocal interjections, song snatches, traffic and radio noise, and sundry feathered friends all impinge on the recordings

When We're Smilin features Bennink's rolling drum work set against Bailey's typically angular responses On *Air Mail Special* the pace is set by Bailey, who turns in incredibly agile performances On both albums Bailey covers a lot of ground, moving from ascetic acoustic to the jagged distortion that rounds off *When We're Smilin'* But he sounds at his most freeranging on *Air Mail Special* — as does Bennink, for that matter, who is at his most inventive when firing off the broken-up guitar phrases submitted to him

Whoever's in the driving seat, both CDs are full of vivid improvising hard music with soft jokes Almost 30 years after the first Incus release (which featured Bailey Bennink and Evan Parker), this remarkably vivid conversation shows no sign of running out of steam
WILL MONTGOMERY

Blackalicious
Nia
MO WAX MWR112 CD/2XLP

A long way from the bombast of the recent Quannum LP, Blackalicious's debut album proper is a contemplative affair, reflecting an arduous three year recording process, during which time MC Gift Of Gab fought a long battle with alcoholism It's a tribute both to his own inner strength and the support of his partner, DJ/producer Chief Xcel, that he emerged sufficiently intact to produce such a coherent work as *Nia* (it's a Swahili word, meaning 'purpose')

Nia operates between the twin poles of rowdy B-boyism and soulful introspection As you might expect considering Gab's circumstances, the former is in far shorter supply, although it does provide one of the album's highlights in the lyrical gymnastics of "A To G" For the most part, however, these are tales of doubt and uncertainty that come in two forms Tracks like "If I May" and "As The World Turns" are painful personal narratives, and for the listener carry the same discomfort factor as any 'confessional' material Much more successful are the tracks where Gab transfers his uncertainty onto a third person narrative "Deception" is a cautionary tale of the darkside of HipHop fame, centering on an unnamed rapper, in "Shallow Days", that same rapper berates a potential acolyte for the stereotypical images imposed on the black man by HipHop's dependence on the gangster ethic for financial success, "Cliff Hanger" uses a fantasy film narrative to highlight the dangers of chasing impossible dreams.

All these words are buoyed up by the production of Chief Xcel Put simply this disc contains some of the best and most vital sounding HipHop around "Making Progress" exemplifies Xcel's production style he keeps the music really sharp-edged, it doesn't have the rounded, blurred flow of funk, there's very little echo, each individual instrument stab lives in its own space With this basic template, he produces an array of different moods fattening the beats with some Harold Faltermeyer-style 80s synths ("Do This My Way"), sketching the twilight in sound with some delicate muted pianos ("Sleep"), smoothly blending some minor key blues guitar with an electro bass ("Dream Season"), then shredding some Metal riffs in the echo chamber ("Trouble") Allied to the emotional rollercoaster of Gab's lyrics, it makes for a truly multidimensional HipHop album
PETER McINTYRE

Blutsiphon
Tammus
GEFRIEM 008 CD

Tammus begins with one of those tunes that digs into your mind with a grappling hook. *"Gentlemen, and the finest of gentlemen, and the finest of "* sings Ella Fitzgerald, ad infinitum, punctuated by a loop from an Ellingtonian big band horn arrangement and a cursed programmed drumbeat that never quite ascends skyward It can only be one thing another perverse release from Gefriem, the label set up by Mouse On Mars's Jan Werner in 1992 Blutsiphon is a solo release by Matthias Koechling, who normally drums with Cologne rock crazies Workshop, the only group genuinely worthy of the legacy of Can But here Koechling demonstrates he's been working on some pretty insane plunderphonic/queasy listening manoeuvres that wouldn't sound unwelcome at a Stock, Hausen & Walkman sewing bee

Blutsiphon (blood siphon) leeches off a vast, rotting pile of techno-dreck Casio keyboard presets and demo tunes, American Cold War paranoia-stokin' propaganda movies, cartoon violence and computer game kickboxing effects ("Burgverlies"), German smoothie voices culled from advertising and didactic broadcasts The cheapness is reinforced by the fact that much of it sounds like it was mastered onto a Boots C90 cassette salvaged from the attic — dropouts, flutter and all Cynical but unable to hide a certain affection as he dumps out this trash, this is ample revenge for the harm afternoon TV's inflicted on the collective mind over the past 25 years
ROB YOUNG

Jeremy Boyle
Songs From The Guitar Solos
SOUTHERN RECORDS 185682 CD

Osymyso
Welcome To The Pailindrome
SPRAWL SP031 CD

The DJ's record case attracts dust and depreciation in about equal measure Both defy categorisation or sequential ordering As such, they represent wayward reasoning, forgotten ambitions and missed beats that breed quirky, tangential side projects such as these Jeremy Boyle takes dinosaur rock guitar stylings from the past and processes them into ambient washes of sound Osymyso's Mark Nicholson superglues discarded sound bites and breezy jingles into mildly entertaining new shapes. Neither, however, displays much in the way of originality

The title Boyle has chosen for his project hints at the tension that exists between the formal shaping and organising principle behind the song and the wayward spiralings of the amplified guitar solo The six tracks reference the unholy Metal pantheon AC/DC, Kiss, Van Halen, Black Sabbath, Led Zeppelin and Jimi Hendrix (what, no Blue Oyster Cult?) With its restful, light blurring of effects, "Kiss" suggests the extent to which the music and mannerisms of New Agers and Heavy Metallers are derived

from the same post-hippy lifestyle options "Sabbath" is a swelling curve of sound underpinned by a distant pounding reminiscent of the next door neighbours banging on the wall to complain about the noise, and "Van Halen" becomes a hymn to amplified buzzsaw sustain a suspended moment of kick ass fury that shimmers to an exotic nothing at its conclusion "Zeppelin" meanwhile manages to sound uncannily like an extract from Bebe and Louis Barron s electronic soundtrack to *Forbidden Planet* Page s theremin will rule forever

If you can get past the allusions to tiresome word play dodgy spelling and Frankie Goes To Hollywood contained in its title, there s still plenty on Osymyso's *Welcome To The Palindrome* to test your patience Nicholson s passion for mannered banality and tasteful scuzziness tends to pall very quickly as do the audio cut-ups of British TV comedians and announcers that proliferate throughout the opening numbers "Welcome To Musicland tries to capture the throwaway silliness of Japan s Fantastic Plastic Machine but without Tomoyuki Tanaka s club pop expansiveness Likewise, "Sod It I m Off To Hawaii" reaches for the majestic Polynesian silliness of Yoshinori Sunahara s "2300 Hawaii" but fails to grab the lei When he takes on the overstuffed cliches of House however, Nicholson can be devastating His "Think And Sing" blends The Swingle Singers with strapping funk bass and tinny synths over a ponderously slow sample of those endlessly repeated Acid war whoops that used to turn up on just about every dance mix in the late 1980s It s a rare moment of insight illustrating how safe Boyle and Nicholson have been overall in their respective choices of material From one week to the next

Smile, it's Sun Ra: reviewed page 91

PHOTO HARRY BORDEN

Sonic Youth
Goodbye 20th Century
SMELLS LIKE RECORDS SYR 4 2XCD

Arguably, the most important aspect of John Cage's legacy was not his body of work but the gift of permission he passed down to subsequent generations. Testing his anti-authoritarian stance to the point of paradox Cage assumed cultural authority that permitted musicians who followed him to expand their working definition of music, and enabled non-musicians to reconceive themselves as musicians. Composition as proscription has in his wake been challenged by a sense of music as a basis for community, as an antidote to cynicism, a programme for exploration, or as therapy for mind and body. There have, of course, been important challenges from elsewhere, but these have often promoted a particular musical style. Cage and his diverse sympathisers have tended to withhold definition, preferring to open up space which has enabled others to act.

Sonic Youth's farewell to the century effectively says thank you to some of the enablers. The group performs music by Cage, Christian Wolff, Pauline Oliveros, James Tenney, Steve Reich, Yoko Ono, Nicolas Slorminsky, Cornelius Cardew, ex-Taj Mahal- and Fluxus fellow Traveller Takehisa Kosugi and George Maciunas. The list could have been compiled by dipping randomly into a compendium of the avant garde. That these figures still appear avant garde is a sign of their continuing usefulness; expended avant gardists soon deliquesce to kitsch. Wolff's appearance as performing guest here seems to offer superficial confirmation that the Sonic Youth realisations of his *Edges* and *Burdocks* are faithful to their scores. *Edges* is scored with arch-indeterminacy for "any number of players, any number of instruments". Its symbolic notation specifies no pitches, harmonic material or rhythms. *Burdocks* is comparably open, although a melodic fragment serves as the piece's signature. In 1971, Wolff assembled David Behrman, David Tudor, Frederic Rzewski and Gordon Mumma to produce a memorable *Burdocks*, documented at the time on a Wergo recording. This new version is quite distinct, yet equally satisfying.

Both Wolff pieces embrace characteristic Sonic Youth sounds. But the pieces by no means sound just like Sonic Youth. Wolff feels that each composition "should have in it a persistent capacity to surprise even the performers themselves, and the composer". Setting aside his authorial valorisation of the project, the relevant fact is his participation in this interdependent group activity: "Most of my scores have to do with groups of people. And it then turns out that a lot of the music making, and this comes out of the score too, has to do with how the individuals relate to each other as they play." Also interacting with the members of Sonic Youth are the aforementioned Kosugi, percussionist William Winant, SY's regular engineer and collaborator Wharton Tiers, Christian Marclay and Jim O'Rourke. Each brings considerable past experience to bear, and it's fascinating to hear the convergence and transformation of those multifarious credentials within the allotted space of a piece such as *Page 183* from Cardew's *Treatise*, with its militant aspiration to community, purged of the trappings of normative musical orthodoxy. Cage's number pieces were similarly conceived as invitations to exploratory community. Such pieces distil the essence of this project, which is a coming together as much as a leavetaking. Cage's *Six* appears in two realisations, but *Four*, requiring the interpenetration of four initially distinct activities through the course of its 30 minutes, is especially striking. Pauline Oliveros wrote *Six For New Time For Sonic Youth* specifically for inclusion on this album. Like her portrait pieces it offers a template for self-discovery. Certainly, at this point Thurston Moore, Lee Ranaldo, Kim Gordon and Steve Shelley sound most abundantly themselves, although the music preserves an exhilarating precariousness at the heart of the familiar.

Other pieces acknowledge composers whose pioneering work with the materiality of sound has evidently left its mark upon the group that recorded *Daydream Nation*. James Tenney is now receiving long-overdue recognition for his contribution. A magnificent realisation by Matthias Kaul of *Having Never Written A Note For Percussion* appeared last year on hat[now]ART's *The Solo Works For Percussion*. On *Goodbye 20th Century* electric guitar, rather than tam-tam, is struck to delineate an acoustic parabola, rising from near silence to clangorous noise, before descending towards silence once more. The piece has the quality of audible sculpture, as has Steve Reich's *Pendulum Music*, where microphones swung over loudspeakers generate whining feedback pulses. Sonic Youth's performance acknowledges the piece's significance in the development of a noise aesthetic.

Pendulum Music's strict physicality is shared by Yoko Ono's *Voice Piece For Soprano*, with Kim and Thurston's daughter Coco Haley Gordon Moore delivering the requisite shriek. It is quintessentially music conceived as event, a conception elaborated by George Maciunas's *Piano Piece #13 (Carpenter's Piece) For Nam June Paik*, where woodwork occurs alongside piano playing. Maciunas, initiator of Fluxus, argued that artists should "demonstrate that anything can be art and anyone can do it". Fellow Fluxus artist Kosugi's + – is nonetheless filled with beautiful sounds, with marimba and glockenspiel emerging as a still centre, eventually placating a spiral of electric turbulence. The other composition here, Nicolas Slonimsky's *Piece Enfantine* is a brief marimba solo. An apt tribute to the composer, who compiled the renowned *Lexicon Of Musical Invective*, and died in 1995 after a lengthy career championing musical innovation, it sits comfortably with the rest. It has been suggested that Sonic Youth are engaging here with theoretical pieces. Forget that and listen: they're just getting on with making music, and it sounds simply fine.

JULIAN COWLEY

the DJ casts aside so much [illegible] blows forward as well as back.

KEN HOLLINGS

Don Byron
Romance With The Unseen
BLU NOTE 499545 2 CD

Time has not been kind to the jazz clarinet. Every other lead instrument has maintained its reputation and flexibility. Saxophones can be urgent or lyrical, pianos reflective or obsessional, trumpets aloof of joyful, even trombones have a certain galumphing charm. But the clarinet has remained stuck at what might crudely be called the rooty-tooty end of jazz, tainted by all those images of British trad bands, condemned to an unappealing kind of prim jauntiness.

Until Don Byron. Throughout the 90s Byron has staged a one man campaign to restore some dignity to the instrument, largely through forcing it into unexpected but productive alliances with more adventurous musics. Previous albums have seen him hauling his clarinet towards HipHop, obliging it to pay tributes to Jimi Hendrix, refusing to let it slide back into mere decorativeness.

All of which makes *Romance With The Unseen* a surprising move. It's a straightforward jazz quartet album, mixing standards and originals like a late 50s Blue Note or Prestige release. As such, it's beautifully done. Byron's deft, flowing lines revisit Ellington and Herbie Hancock pieces (though the cover of Paul McCartney's irretrievably fey "I'll Follow The Sun" is a baffling choice), while his own compositions, especially the mournful "Basquiat" and the slow-burn threat of "Closer To Home", are no less impressive.

It's a remarkably unshowy record, which makes it all the more welcome in these over-hyped times. There are no fireworks, no hidden agendas, no flailing pretensions. Consequently it runs the risk of being called dull, but I suspect its quiet virtues will long outlast most of the next big things foisted upon us.

ANDY MEDHURST

Cornelius Cardew
Treatise
HAT [NOW] ART 31 22 CD

A charismatic and hugely important figure in post-war experimental music, Cardew collaborated with Stockhausen and Ligeti in the late 50s, becoming a devotee of Cage and his circle by the early 60s. Inspired by Cage's

musical and social anarchism, Cardew all but gave up composition for improvisation joining the British Improv unit AMM in one of its earliest incarnations *Treatise* is a direct result of this encounter a 193 page graphic score that replaces conventional musical notation with a collection of lines, angles and discs intended as visual prompts for improvisation The piece equally reflects Cardew's work as a graphic designer, revealing both the influence of Russian Constructivist geometry and the curves and bubbles of 1960s graphics As a convert to Maoism in the early 70s Cardew repudiated his earlier work *Treatise* included — in favor of a Romantic populist aesthetic Yet by all accounts *Treatise* remains, along with *The Great Learning* (sadly unavailable on disc) Cardew s masterpiece

In the three decades since its completion portions of this immense and imposing score have been performed and recorded primarily by AMM and its members Yet this release is the first to offer a reading of the entire piece, which here stretches over two discs and clocks in at just under two and a half hours Arranged by *Wire* contributor Art Lange (who gave Anthony Braxton's *Composition 10* a similar treatment last year) the recording features a phenomenal quintet composed primarily of young Chicagoans on a battery of acoustic, analogue and digital instruments

The performance is glorious, an exemplary session of ingenious and respectful collective improvisation Slow spare and sombre this rendering often calls to mind the work of Morton Feldman Each new event emerges lovely and unexpected, forming an array of overlapping fragments pianistic scatterings, clarinet flutters and chirps, scrapes of percussion tinny oscillations and the insectile clicks of bustling digitalia Led by Jim D'Rourke on laptop the electronics steal the show, offering a boundless array of ever astonishing sonic curiosities Along with the wonderful, recently released debut from MIMED (led by AMM's Keith Rowe), this recording casts 60s experimental Improv squarely into the digital age and confirms the vitality of Cardew s musical and social concerns

CHRISTOPH COX

Pandit Hari Prasad Chaurasia & Pandit Shiv Kumar Sharma

Rasdhara

NAVRAS N[illegible] 4[illegible] xCD

In 1967 Hari Prasad Chaurasia and Shiv Kumar Sharma recorded *Call Of The Valley*, a cycle of short ragas intended in part to accustom Western ears to music from the Hindustani tradition 30 years later they played a concert at London s Royal Festival Hall to celebrate India's half century of independence Two ragas, each lasting around an hour recorded with marvellous clarity on that occasion, are presented on *Rasdhara*

John Cage was fond of quoting Coomaraswamy to the effect that the traditional function of art is to imitate nature in the manner of its operation Listening to *Rasdhara* it is not difficult to discern a realisation of that belief, heard at length in its expansive grandeur, the music speaks of continuity with organic processes The breath flowing through Hari Prasad Chaurasia's bamboo flute has a directly affecting elemental quality The sounds of shimmering delicacy which Shiv Kumar Sharma coaxes from the gently hammered strings of his dulcimer-like santoor evoke the play of brilliant sunlight upon water Chaurasia himself compares their musical partnership to the confluence of two rivers It may look fanciful in print, but test the assertion against the rare strength and beauty of their performance on *Raga Jhinjhoti* and *Raga Kirwani* and the description stands

Earlier this year Sharma's *Sampradaya*, issued by Real World won deservedly high praise, while Chaurasia featured as special guest alongside John McLaughlin on *Remember Shakti* and conclusively stole the show The refined, studied and intuitive interaction on *Rasdhara* is absorbing on a level that transcends both of those projects Equally it surpasses their magisterial two volume collaboration *The Valley Recalls* issued by Navras in 1995 This is scintillating music in a literal as well as a figurative sense, and it should enthrall any listener who values authentic artistry

JULIAN COWLEY

Che-SHIZU

Glimmering Star

ALEUTIAN RETTO ALT001 LP

Che-SHIZU have long been one of the Tokyo label PSF's wildest cards Never as instantly taggable as the likes of labelmates Musica Transonic or Ghost, they've been pretty much overlooked by Western noisemongers who favour the brickbat to the head over the pleasures of slowly seeping psychedelic movement

Sure, vocalist Chie Mukai's low gurgle can be unsettling at first, and her kokyu playing (Japan s only traditional bowed instrument) really buzzes and grates with a particularly gruff melancholic tone but give the music the time and the remote emotional topography plotted by the group becomes evident

What might well have started out as mere ineptitude has now become a working strategy with drummer Ikuro Takahashi (who also plays in Keiji Haino's Fushitsusha) staying so unerringly off the beat that entire new rhythmic possibilities unfold, each of them charged with subtlety meanwhile guitarist Keita Koma stumbles over delicate licks and dead strings in a struggle to emote in a more precise manner than a 'well played solo would allow him

Glimmering Star feels like a step in a more straightforward direction The deep, oceanic reverb of previous records like *Nazareth* is gone, replaced by a less brain-altering but no less satisfying aesthetic that gives the nod to the naive pop of Osaka s Org label Four tracks unwind in their own time, soaked in a Velvet Underground-like hush, until Mukai moves onto piano for the epic closer "The Great Bird", an intense, elemental headrush that marries pounding grandiose chords with uncoiling serpentine guitar

DAVID KEENAN

Roger Doyle

Babel/KBBL

SIDO 003 5/006-7 5XCD

Inspired originally by Pierre Henry, and then later by the futuristic cityscapes of *Blade Runner*, Irish electroacoustic composer and conceptualist Roger Doyle has, since 1986, been grafting his musical ideas into one ongoing monumental concept album — *Babel* Compositions are conceived as virtual rooms within a fictional skyscraper through which Doyle blends the aural representation of actual places with the construction of imaginary 'dream' spaces

This five CD compilation gathers together three swathes of 'tower' compositions — *Temple Music, Chambers & Spirit Levels* and *Delusional Architecture* — along with four shows from Babel s virtual radio station KBBL — an offshoot of the Babel idea that has generated a life of its own The three tower CDs interconnect electronics and programming in various ways with keyboards and acoustic instruments saxophone, French horn, violin — as well as electric guitar and voice It's a varied display At one end of the scale are pieces like "Mansard" which combines tentative Satie-like piano with fragmentary close-miked fumblings on objects and an unsettling screaming sound which might be human or machine At the other end is the virtuoso programming of "Cantilena" commissioned by the Groupe De Musique Experimentale De Bourges in which the voice of Elena Lopez is perforated into a manic stutter of whizzing digital repetitions

The *Temple Music* CD is perhaps the most rewarding listen some of the pieces generating a taut and glossy art fusion sound somewhere between Brian Eno Henry Cow and koto music In the more dynamic compositions Doyle toys with electric cymbals booms and bells, sudden jitters and whirls like a cross between Peking opera and Warner Bros cartoons The ever present digital basis makes him capable of suddenly crushing and crinkling the whole sound environment compressing it into a non-Euclidean sludge

Built into the spatial concept of *Babel* is the conceit that in certain spaces one can hear the music of other rooms in the distance Thus a musician rehearsing for one piece can be 'overheard in another and tracks are cross-referenced in a number of such ways It s a novel concept of internal sampling that can make for interesting collaborations but much of the time the music seems compromised by the conceptual baggage — gesturing towards the imaginary logic of the building becomes a

KNIE HEBEL ABZIEH PRESSE

neue deutsche dada pop

GAGARIN RECORDS

Psykoscripoppia

LP GR 2003

Dentists Insect Swing Noise Disko and the Smell of Triangulars are waiting for you on this manic electro punk/pop compilation feat Helgoland Felix Kubin Brezel Goring Groenland Orchester and Max Klayderstorm

remixen Die Welttraumforscher

LP GR 2004

The most charming group from Switzerland now remixed by Mouse on Mars Neoangin F X Randomiz Schlammpeitziger Klangwart B Morgenstern Felix Kubin Kiss Kiss Bang Bang Nove Huta Joe Tabu and H Sack Ziegler

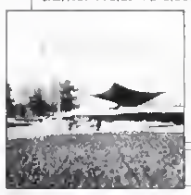
staubgold

Groenland Orchester *Trigger happiness*

CD staubgold 10

electronic pop with cooking tunes frozen birds secret bits and noise tracking from heart by Reznicek and Jyrgen Hall and become the most incredible hits of this year (de bug)

Gunter Adler *15 electronic pieces*



CD staubgold 6

solo project from Groenland Orchester s Jyrgen Hall hiding his paranoia inside an elegant and calm suitcase Goldstaub!

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Mos Def

Mos Def
Black On Both Sides
RAWKUS P50141 CD/2XLP

HipHop's most eloquent spokesman takes his rightful place on the throne with *Black On Both Sides*, which fulfils the promise of everything Mos Def has put his name to since that first "Reflection Eternal" 12" A deeply personal project, yet one that takes in a vast range of emotions and scenarios, its only drawback is its length. HipHop is an involving music, both for the listener and the producer, and to sustain the level of intensity that Mos Def operates at across 70 minutes is exhausting Trouble is, once you tune into the grace and authority of that voice, it's hard to tune out.

The album is produced by A Tribe Called Quest's Ali Shaheed Muhammed and Diamond D, among others, and features guest spots from Busta Rhymes and, of course, occasional rap sparring partner Talib Kweli, plus welcome returns from Vinia Mojica and Weldon Irvine, who both appeared on the *Blackstar* album. Their contributions help make this a multidimensional, varispeed, funked-up delight, culture raiding from the 70s right through to the 90s, even sampling Gregory Isaacs on the way. But what holds you is Mos Def's voice and the tales he tells.

Because *Black On Both Sides* is rooted in Def's own experiences, tracks like "Brooklyn" and "Mr Nigga" speak with authority. On a deeper level the album taps into a centuries' old tradition of black expression, revealing HipHop as its latest manifestation. But when a track such as "Rock N Roll" targets Whitey for appropriating and diluting black music, from slave songs through Chuck Berry, Little Richard and Bo Diddley, Mos Def spins part-truths into the hoariest of revisionist rock-historical cliches, without acknowledging the enthusiastic exchange of ideas that has gone on between musicians since the jazz age and even earlier Whatever, it's an easy vote winner, which never fails to sucker in guilt-ridden white liberals; but morphing the track into a punk thrash at the end is a nice sardonic touch. A more oblique treatment of the subject comes in "Habitat", whose music is based on a clever twist of Dr Dre's production for Tupac's "California". HipHop's sample-based aesthetic — where, effectively, nothing's ever new — brings into question whether it really has firm roots in any tradition.

Feeding on itself, commenting on its own politics and personalities, is a favoured weapon in the HipHop arsenal, and Mos Def uses it to telling effect. His biting attack on consumerism and the ripple effect of advertising on "New World Water" lead to a pointed critique of HipHop's flaunting of its own wealth. Lifting the melody line from The Wu-Tang Clan's "CREAM", probably the pinnacle of this mindset, needs no further comment. Most devastating of all, however, is "Hip Hop", a short but powerful reflection on the troubled relationship between rap culture and the music industry, which ends on the bleak observation: *"Hiphop will amaze you, praise you, pay you, do whatever you say to, but black, it can't save you"*

There's no real answer to that and Mos Def doesn't pretend to have one. He simply lays it out as he feels it, and leaves listeners to figure the rest out for themselves. Yet there are positive conclusions to be drawn from *Black On Both Sides*, the most pertinent being how Mos Def has transformed the raw material of his own experiences into a complex and many layered work — the odd cliched lapse notwithstanding The very act of making the album proved to be his answer Now that is truly conscious HipHop.

PETER McINTYRE

way of stringing material together which might have been better developed on its own terms additionally the concept of 'Babel' can also mean that anything goes David Shea got further with the idea of a futuristic babel simply by sampling the world in his *Tower Of Mirrors* It's unclear whether the skyscraper concept is meant to dictate compositional procedure or provide a visionary inspiration for the musical ideas, and I suspect the ambiguity tempts Doyle to waver in a middle ground avoiding following either aspect to its logical or imaginative conclusion

The two CDs of pastiche radio broadcasts are strangest of all Complete with call-ins advertisements, transatlantic voiceovers and fake groups they are distantly comparable to the cult TV series *Wild Palms* in their creation of an ersatz [illegible] reality One Babel inhabitant phones in to complain about the noise of the station seeping through the tower late at night At the same time they teeter unevenly between throwaway banality a virtual Radio 2 as lounge-like and mediocre as the real thing and a New York-style arthouse cyber manifesto It's difficult to know how to take this Again, the radio station has become a good way of stringing a load of ideas together but the music straddled between cyber pose and pisstake sounds half-cocked though one track manages to create the feel of brooding pseudo-Berlin art-pop Eccentric listening for sure, though less 'babelous' than spinning the FM dial for real

MATT FFYTCHE

Fennesz
Plus Forty Seven Degrees [illegible] Minus Sixteen Degrees [illegible]
TOUCH TO 40 CD

Of the names associated with Austria's Mego label, Christian Fennesz is the one who has tapped most into the legacy of psychedelic and Industrial music and the resources of organic noise production Here he takes the standard Mego language of needling synthetic tones random clicks buzzes and electronic blisters and fuses them into a fluid rush of energy If at times the results recall Merzbow it's nothing to do with the scale and density of the noise but more the rhythm of cutting and collapsing between streaming bodies of sound As vibrant as this music becomes with the friction of speeding numbers and fine-tuned acid fugues it remains inventively lucid Much of the disc is rollercoaster stuff digital psychedelia speedfreak agitation virtuoso sound derailments A more tranquil track shows that he can alter the configuration too it has the hushed spirituality of an Arvo Part meditation heard beyond the burning rim of a bleached and blasted foreground

What sticks in the ear is the clarity with which he shifts between different swathes and bandwidths of noise From moment to moment what you catch feels like a pinball machine a child's electronic toy a rasping insect a fax, or simply the abstract whirr of digital information all caught up in an articulate but pressured streamline

MATT FFYTCHE

Frontier
Suture
PERISHABLE PER008 CD 12

Since their 1995 debut Chicago trio Frontier have embraced both tonal experimentation and a more direct conventional approach to alt rock These different styles have tended to be mutually exclusive *Live At The Empty Bottle* album for example was a driving piece of guitar music with none of the drawn out drones of the preceding Frontier release Indeed they sound like the work of two entirely different groups But with *Suture* Frontier have developed a working method which combines these two broad strands in their music Essentially it's a collection of live samples which have been reassembled by various recording engineers into finished tracks

Suture is a series of problems matched with a variety of solutions involving various low end Ambient and distorted treatments "Autoclave" sets up a shimmering guitar drone which is layered over noisy sampled beats with engineer John David Hiler blurring the boundaries between the live precision drumming of Michael Tsoulos and his studio (re)construction 'Nutley 10' opens with a Bill Clinton sample culled from a presidential address, which is assaulted by cut-up beats and severe guitar edits "Journal D Un Cure De Campagne" has a more rigid linear groove programmed by Casey 'Designer' Rice (here calling himself Resigned) to constantly break up and reassemble itself The closing "Strong City" is a straight live recording of the trio, a surprising but useful reminder of the integrity of the source material

TOM RIDGE

Fushitsusha
I Saw It! That Which Before I Could Only Sense
PARATACTILE PLE1106/D7 2XCD

So this is how it ends with the ghost hum of a guitar and the last cry of a dwarf star wailing against the dying of the light over tom-toms and a limping bass figure running down its

depleted batteries The voice fading into nothingness has run out of words, but if it had anything left to say, would it ask, "Could the last person leaving the universe put out the light"? Though volumes have yet to be devoted to the cattike wit of Keiji Haino, his title for the closing coda to two soul-pulverising hours of his trio Fushitsusha's new studio recording is indicative of his self-reflexive humour always present, seldom remarked upon "Hasn't Something Like This Happened Before?"

Indeed it has, and like before it is always the same Except when it's more so Or when it's better Or, God forbid, when it's a little worse Once you cotton on to how Haino's endlessly fissioning creative energy is channelled through various ongoing solo and group projects, each with clearly defined parameters, you'll know he doesn't belong to the fraternity of fickle fuckers who slough off artistic modes of expression like they were last season's fashions Just like his clothes, his music wears black year in, year out Needless to add, the listening is no less demanding, absorbing or enthralling for having a pretty good idea beforehand of the cut of a new record — or for knowing that, as ever, the music seems to be mapping a desire to merge with the moment of its extinction Materialists insist that such a moment is just the last person to leave the studio throwing the off-switch, but the nihilist dancers this side of the divide know better Of all Haino's projects, his guitar-led power trio Fushitsusha is at once the most physical and metaphysical, and every time they go out they both refine and redraw their lines of inquiry into the music's shuddering walls of sound

Though Haino's complete discography is presently pushing the 100 mark, somewhat astonishingly this is his first studio set to attain a proper UK release Well, OK, Blast First commemorated his London Disobey concerts with Haino and Fushitsusha CDs, and his nighttime outfit Nijiumu contributed a disc to Big Cat's *Driftworks* box set That they were all live recordings isn't what differentiates them from this Paratactile set, however, as Fushitsusha invariably go for single live takes in the studio, albeit with the advantage of working under more rigorously determined conditions On this evidence they got both the feng shui and technical settings exactly right, for *I Saw It!* is astounding on a number of counts, not the least of them being the sheer stamina required of the three players to get through the sessions

The brief coda follows the album's 83 minute title piece, which takes up the last half hour of disc one and continues for most all of disc two Over time, Haino's titles have come to read like picture captions, part tonic, part ironic, part reminiscent of how Antonin Artaud captioned his drawings Four such titles — too long to repeat them here — set up the album's tour de force The evasive sense of being momentarily glimpsed in "I Saw It! That Which Before I Could Only Sense" is musically reconfigured as a blasted Romantic landscape, where drummer Ikuro Takahashi's painstakingly amassed beat towers endlessly tumble into ruin and longstanding bassist Yasushi Ozawa's rollered slabs of impacted noise dissolve in the blackness raining down from Haino's nightsky guitar which paradoxically seals the piece at the moment of (un)becoming for all eternity

In the passage of its 83 immolating minutes, the trio zooms in and out and around this same fixed place, portraying it from any number of angles, like they were unscrolling a '100 views of Mt Fushitsusha' hellscreen to the organ-like overtones cascading over Haino's heavily layered reverb and ghost echo Then that coda comes in, asking "Hasn t Something Like This Happened Before?", its koan-like query tripping the disc's metaphorical repeat button and trapping the willing listener in its spin cycle So how *does* this story end? The same as it began It never ends

BIBA KOPF

Ground-Zero
Last Concert
ALCOHOL ALGZ1 CD

Ground-Zero's ear-splitting 'farewell' performance at the London Musicians' Collective festival in May 1997 seemed the last word from this amazing group — it was certainly billed as such at the time But it wasn't the first time the group, led by Otomo Yoshihide, had said goodbye — they'd suspended activities for much of 1994 — and it wouldn t be the last There was another, final 'dissolving concert, held in Tokyo in 1998 Originally issued on Zero member Sachiko M's Amoebic imprint, this latest addition to the premium strength Alcohol roster is the UK release of that performance The 13 piece line-up is an augmented version of the group that blasted London, and includes Uemura Masahiro (drums) Shuichi Chino (keyboards) and Junji Hirose (sax), all of whom performed in the ramalama-ragbag early 1990s Ground-Zero The inclusion of three keyboards, three saxes and a koto makes for a startling sound palette

By the time of their last concert Ground-Zero were a mass of closely integrated influences, rather than a group translating and re-shaping different styles The first track on the album works with organic sci-fi gloop, swooping and bleeping along with keyboard sounds reminiscent of early-70s space age Herbie Hancock, but also glancing further back to early electronic music Slowly, melancholic high tones sketch a keening narrative over the bubbling mix Then the mood shifts with track two, a high energy noisefest propelled by Masahiro's drum storms Criss-crossing keyboard lines create a hurricane of sound, over which curious ensemble saxophone parts struggle to make themselves heard The piece subsides into a treated bass part (or so it sounds) that could soundtrack the death by violence of a large sea-cow

The defining track, however, is the third and final one Back then, Otomo's music was on the brink of shifting (with the sine tones of ISO for example) to an increasing narrowing of focus The imminent shift is telegraphed on *Last Concert* by the extraordinary high-pitched sampled phrase used by Sachiko M on the 40 minute "Consume Red" (from the 1997 album of the same name) The sound-swatch is hammered at relentlessly until three quarters of the way in the rest of the group move from impromptu accompaniment into an overwhelming ecstatic statement when, briefly, a rapt Ayler-like force takes over from the feeling of constriction Then the piece deliquesces into a mass of sine tones, similar to the opening of the first track, finally resolving itself with a single, sustained high pitch

And that's that for Ground-Zero from plenum to vacuum in three large steps This is a tremendous album, growing noisily out of Otomo's unassuming conceptual clarity Can t wait for the reunion

WILL MONTGOMERY

Gyaatees
Welcome Motoharu Yoshizawa
Last Live
CAPTAIN TRIP CTCD200 CD

Gyaatees
Gyaatees Meets Mani Neumeier
CAPTAIN TRIP CTCD181/182 2XCD

Second and third releases respectively from Gyaatees, a free music group based around three intellectually challenged seiso Buddhist priests from Koganji Temple near Mt Fuji Seiso normally refers to devout priests who forego meat and sex in order to be closer to enlightenment, but in Gyaatees case it would seem the disability itself has allowed them to maintain the purity they were born with Japan's disabled still get a raw deal in a society that prefers to hide them away at home or in institutions, so it's admirable to see Tokyo's underground music scene providing not just access, but a platform for expression And it's pretty clear that expression is Gyaatees' raison d etre — there is no hint that the group is some misguided attempt to inflict personal musical therapy upon unwitting audiences While improvising with the disabled undoubtedly presents its own unique problems, Gyaatees bring some of their own to the table The decision to work around specific songs, even though the two seiso vocalists have problems remembering the words is an obvious one More problematic is how their very unpredictability and unrestrained enthusiasm (it's hard to talk of technique as such) test the talents of the other musicians to the limit

This is most apparent on the disc with the late and much missed bassist Motoharu Yoshizawa Yoshizawa's 40 year experience of playing free music gives him the necessary balance of technique and empathy to alter his

aleg red shift swing
ALG 101

love comes shining over the mountains
RCD 40

farfein valen the eternal
RCD 113

jazzkammer limex
RCD 2014

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Wendy Carlos
Switched-On Boxed Set
EAST SIDE DIGITAL ESD 81422 4XCD

God knows, there are enough CDs out there that clamour to be recognised as expressions of post-human synthesis and the 21st century zeitgeist. Then a box like this comes along, a reissue project no less, that seems determined to mask every science fiction notion that it cannot fail to stimulate. Carrying its pretensions literally on its sleeve, the *Switched-On Boxed Set* is dressed up to look like a sawn off sample from one of those instant 'classic literature' libraries that can be purchased by mail order from colour supplements. Bundled inside are two booklets of exhaustive documentation, stuffed with techno-fetish photographs of Moog modules, tape boxes, wiring diagrams, filter knobs and oscillator panels, not to mention a selection of Wendy's cats. It's all mad enough to be rather charming. You also get four albums — *Switched-On Bach*, *The Well-Tempered Synthesizer*, *Switched-On Bach II* and *Switched-On Brandenburgs* — plus original demo recordings and enhanced CD material that includes an analogue synth and more domestic pets to save on your hard disk. Originally released in 1968 by CBS, who grudgingly slotted the album into an otherwise forgotten Bach-to-Rock campaign, *Switched-On Bach* sold in unprecedented quantity. It was the best selling classical album to that point in recorded history, in fact, just to choke the curators of the classical museum. Though the full horror of Prog 'n' pomp rock's affair with the classics was a few years in the future, the pop public had already shown some interest in modernised versions of JS Bach and Tchaikovsky. *Switched-On Bach* was not Bee Bumble And The Stingers or Jacques Loussier, however. This was the real thing (allegedly), played on an instrument that the general public could neither pronounce nor fathom: Robert Moog's Moog synthesiser.

Like many other penurious teens of the psychedelic years, I first encountered a track from the album on a CBS budget sampler called *Rock Machine I Love You*. Affordable if risible artefacts of corporate counter culture, the *Rock Machine* series packaged oddities such as Don Ellis, The United States Of America, Laura Nyro and Walter Carlos alongside bluechip signings such as Simon And Garfunkel. The concept was marketed with copywriting drivel that reassured potential dimwits from the hippy nation that "the sound is music. It's your bag. So it's ours". Wendy Carlos's copious notes for the box suggest that *Switched-On Bach* was a reluctant passenger on this particular bandwagon. Far from being children of the revolution, Carlos and her collaborator, Rachel Elkind were sophisticated cultural reactionaries. Their production company, Trans-Electronic Music Productions, Inc, was united in its rejection of musical modernism yet dedicated to technological innovation. "We were trying to counter the 'musical nihilism,' devoid of melody, harmony, meter, rhythm and human expression," Carlos writes. "I still flare in anger that so many decades of this century were wasted in pursuit of ideals of rigid negativity, and composers were judged more by what they avoided than what they created."

If *Switched-On Bach* had been less of a runaway success, Carlos might have spent more of her formative years creating an electronic music that reflected these beliefs. As it was, CBS demanded repeat performances until Carlos and Elkind were sick of it. Is it possible that Carlos believed that her electronic interpretations of Bach, Monteverdi, Handel and Scarlatti somehow bridged the 'nihilist' decades to make some continuity with pre-modernist aesthetics? I doubt it. For a start, the first Moog was monophonic, so this essentially performative music had to be built up in stages with tape overdubbing. *Switched-On Bach* was an important step in the shift of recording away from documentation of real-time performance, a development noted and admired by Glenn Gould. I have to admit that I'm listening to these recordings for the first time, since I would always skip Carlos's brash assault on Bach included on *Rock Machine* and consciously avoided all other exposure, along with subsequent travesties by Keith Emerson, Tomita and their comrades in crime. Since 1968, however, we have been immersed in a sufficiently cumulative number of exercises in electro-counterpoint, postmodern Baroque and arpeggiated one-finger rondos in the New Romantic style to cajole us into submission. To my amazement I now listen with a kind of perverse joy to the consummately skilful cheesiness of it all, hearing music that prepared us psychologically for both the theme from Pac-Man and Michael Nyman's score for *The Draughtsman's Contract*. While we are in this historical frame of mind, we shouldn't forget the increasingly ubiquitous digi-melodies of mobile phones or the Stylophone classics that entertain us as we 'wait to be connected'. What once seemed a cul-de-sac of cultural conservatism has, voilà, become a time machine interpenetrating our present. *Prelude And Fugue #2 In C Minor*, for example, begins as a deranged white noise chase for microbots, using sounds and sequences not totally dissimilar to the early work of Derrick May and Juan Atkins, before lurching into full-blooded pomp and circumstance. All that's missing is a Roland 909 bass drum and triple time hi-hats. Similarly, Scarlatti's *Sonata In G Major* could be YMO at their perkiest. Only when Carlos attempted legato rather than staccato did the madness of it all collapse into bathos. Handel's *Air*, from *The Well-Tempered Synthesizer*, sounds like the plaint of a Christmas busker equipped with a 20 quid keyboard manufactured by Tandy.

Wendy Carlos

Other than that, the sounds are extraordinarily rich, which is a testament to Bob Moog's remarkable invention as well as the technical skill of Carlos and Elkind. But sound is only a part of this product. As with most boxed set reissues, the documentation verges on fanatical. With all the attention to historical detail, I can't help noticing that Wendy has doctored, if you'll excuse the expression, what she calls the original cover artwork, replacing her old masculine name with the female. Like a victim of Soviet political manoeuvring, Walter has vanished in the cause of being forever Wendy.

Nobody can hold much objection to this, since Wendy has every right to be who she wishes, but such revisionism calls undue attention to itself. I feel compelled to link the physical, now digital transformations of her identity with the allusions to biological transformations embodied in the cover illustration of a plug in, patchbay man-machine. The music itself initiates a similar process, of course, being an updating of cultural memory. At the end of a lengthy journey through every word, image and sound of this package, issues of gender, identity and mutation resonate so loudly that the music struggles to compete.
DAVID TOOP

playing to follow the seisos' lead He is able to adjust his effects-altered electric bass playing to complement their seemingly random shouting and whoops, adding a sometimes droll fleetness, sometimes a heartaching depth to the music His contributions are a testament to the power and spirit of one of the country's greatest individualist talents Sadly, though, they are also diamonds glinting in the mud dredged up by the other musicians (a second bassist, keyboards, guitar, drums, tenor sax), who are all too often straitjacketed inside their own dull straightahead grooves and dreadful background churning The second bassist and the keyboard-playing priest warrant a special mention for the Prog-funk nastiness of their sounds. A flat and unforgiving live mix, probably caused by too many people on stage, doesn't help much either

The double live release with ex-Guru Guru and Tiere Der Nacht drummer Mani Neumeier is more pleasing Thankfully, it gives less room to frenetic free-for-alls and more to smaller personnel combinations, giving the players room to breathe The seiso seem more relaxed, switching from the whoops of pure joy and hoarse singing to Buddhist chanting, and the contributions by one of their number on percussion and beautifully strangled sax are more easily appreciated Neumeier's drumming is never the most interesting, but here the cleaner recording serves his energetic propulsion and tubby bottom to fine effect.

ALAN CUMMINGS

Percy Howard
Incidental Seductions
MATERIALI SONORI MASO90109 CD

Percy Howard sings in a manly baritone that strives towards bel canto, away from the note-defying expression of blues and rock Sophisticated soulmen like Luther Vandross and Will Downing do the same but with them sexual innuendo unravels the formality of classical delivery In contrast, Howard's performance is teeth-gratingly theatrical, a cross between Paul Robeson and Sarah Jane Morris His voice lacks the non-representational urgency and idiosyncrasy which make recorded utterance vital

The all-star cast (always a bad sign) includes Vernon Reid on guitar, Bill Laswell on bass, Charles Hayward on drums, and Steve Sullivan and John Ettinger on pastiche Islamic violins When it's there, the beat is reminiscent of the soulless, mechanical thump of Golden Palominos or U2, though Howard prefers to float in the modal trances that are all the rage in pretentious pop Instruments keen emotionally, but there's no particular reason why one note appears rather than another, everything resolves to a sonorous drone Over the top — no interaction with the instrumentalists — Howard over-acts his clumsy lyrics *"Why do I want to discover your secrets/and be your collaborator/unlock the secrets/to know what you smell like"*

When the group rocks out on the last number, somewhat predictably, Howard's bellow recalls Meatloaf — though you miss Marvin Aday's tight structures and purposeful cartoon exaggeration How much 'mature rock' rubbish is Bill Laswell going to endorse before he becomes a laughing stock?

BEN WATSON

June Of 44
In The Fishtank
KONKURRENT FISH6 CD

Recorded for Dutch label Konkurrent as part of its *In The Fishtank* series of releases, this session finds one-time math rockers June Of 44 expanding on the eclecticism they have recently displayed to strong effect on *Anahata*, released earlier this year Recorded fast at the tail end of a European tour, June Of 44 cut loose any lingering stylistic constraints to move boldly into new territory The spontaneous nature of the sessions sharpens the group's sense of experimentation The opening percussion-dominated "Pregenerate" sets the scene, building up to a heady finish without sacrificing their raw but loose feel Indeed, they sound a lot less uptight and constipated than on the pummelling and grinding music they used to make "Generate" expands on the tight yet supple funkiness of *Anahata*, while "Modern Hereditary Dance Steps" is harder and sleaker, almost kosmischly groovy

TOM RIDGE

Richard H Kirk
Darkness At Noon
TOUCH TO 41 CD

A single composition lasting 38 minutes, *Darkness At Noon* concerns itself not so much with the pity and the horror of war in the age of intelligent machines as the media sludge it inevitably generates It finds Kirk revisiting the industrial wastelands which he and Steve Mallinder traversed so meticulously as Cabaret Voltaire in the late 70s This time around the dark evangelical energies of "Slugging For Jesus" have been replaced by the remote technological vampirism of CNN and the international data markets, as they respond to scenes of atrocity already stripped of their flesh by geo-political distance and the deadening familiarities of 'informed comment'

Kirk cites "electronic assault systems, digital warfare" and "the use of atomic fission to decompose human beings and their cities" among his selected sound sources, the entire list being reproduced on both the inner and outer sleeve as if to underline the seriousness of his intent The result is a withering inrush of ugly electronic oscillations, shortwave signals and deep sonic detonations Most dispiriting of all, however are the recurring voices endlessly repeating strings of numbers or asking pointless, unanswered questions about the fate of displaced refugees. The inhuman face of conflict, as a result, begins to look increasingly human Pretty it ain't, but Kirk has managed to conjure up the image of battle as a spectral mirage generated by TV screens and computer terminals An oasis of horror in a desert of boredom, *Darkness At Noon* exists at the point where genocidal technology and postmodern culture both patch in to the same console Happy listening

KEN HOLLINGS

Adam Lane
Hollywood Wedding
CADENCE JAZZ RECORDS CJR1104 CD

Bassist/composer Adam Lane writes for ensembles that feature reeds, brass, electric guitarists and personnel specialising in electronic interference and fuzz bass grotesqueries The tracks on this CD were recorded over the last five years in various locations in and around Hollywood Lane evidently didn't set his DAT rolling until he was thoroughly prepared Taught by Leo Smith — the founding trumpeter of the Chicago free jazz school — he cites Mingus, Xenakis, Scelsi and Beefheart as inspirations, but he remains his own man

As a composer, Lane draws on jazz — walking bass recorded to the fore, buoyant horn charts, expressive solos, collective esprit — but is not trapped in the genre On the contrary, he dares to be totally nuts, which is an undeniable plus On "Monolith" the horn section is chillingly tight, delivering blocks of sound with the strident impassiveness of early electronic music. The unsentimental punch of Lane's orchestra recalls Johnny 'Guitar' Watson ("Ain't That A Bitch") and Edgard Varese (*Hyperprism*) His arrangements avoid cliches, so he'll arrive at an original texture by combining pinging electronics and twirling alto saxes Composerly deftness abolishes the 'now it's my turn to solo' bustle and confusion that curses European improvising big bands

"Dedicated (A Version For Fred Hopkins)" has languid trumpet worthy of the prime exponents of West Coast Cool (Marty Paich, Don Ellis), on the Henry Mancini-like "Blues For Richard Davis", Brian McFadin's tenor solo works because he's concentrating on Lane's obstacle course changes rather than playing a role On "Fire Up The Pig", Jason Roth plays gongs and vacuum cleaner The piece is a through-composed montage of out-to-lunch avant gardism Moondog meets Eric Dolphy in a kebab-induced nightmare Insane shrieking sopranos, baying trombone and skronk electronica turn "New Mars" into a phantasmagoria of scratchy green sweaters and mysteriously vanished underwear — a voluptuous dementia worthy of Konrad Boehmer

Adam Lane has a little way to go before he attains Simon H Fell's polyversal xenochronicities, but this debut does indicate that Fell's is not the only Third Stream in town good news for fans of that threatened genre

BEN WATSON

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John Adams
The John Adams Earbox
NONESUCH 794532 10XCD

Think Adams, think minimalism? This massive retrospective of the American composer's work takes us pretty well all the way through his catalogue, from *Christian Zeal And Activity* (1973) to *Gnarly Buttons* (1996). What is surprising is how little of the music sounds like minimalism pure and simple; but then Adams is rarely pure and simple.

Sure, there are the repetitions, rhythmic calling cards and cell-like motifs that are Adams's inheritance from minimalism, but more often than not they are only a structural underpinning for what Adams's booklet essay describes as "massed sonorities riding on great rippling waves of energy". Adams suggests that his music from the 90s no longer fits that description. While it's true that the waves of energy now ripple less assertively, the massed sonorities are still there, especially in the works he writes for orchestra.

In fact, the orchestra has been Adams's main instrument. Other minimalists have constructed particular ensembles to match the music they want to write. More often than not, Adams writes for more or less conventional symphony or chamber orchestra. Nothing wrong with that, of course. For all its faults (mostly institutional), the Western, which is to say European orchestra remains as sophisticated and flexible as any musical ensemble, and Adams makes it work for him.

Listen to the accompaniment he supplies for the soloist (Gidon Kremer) in his 1993 *Violin Concerto*, a thick, undulating texture against which the solo violin keens and wails in virtuosic ecstasy. This is Adams at his most European, prepared to accept the genre of concerto as it comes to him, as a showpiece for the soloist. I find something enervating in the relentlessness of the solo part, but that's merely personal taste.

Elsewhere, the genres come in for some rough handling: opera, for example, in *Nixon In China* (1987) and *The Death Of Klinghoffer* (1991), each represented by a single disc of highlights. Even in abridged form they are innovative pieces that might, if composers and opera houses are prepared to listen, help to recast the whole form of opera: *Nixon* is playful, caustic and effervescent; *Klinghoffer* is melancholy and statuesque; both utterly are contemporary. My enthusiasm for them is not unbounded, but they are powerful and serious works that earn respect.

Set against their achievements, Adams' latest stagework, *I Was Looking At The Ceiling* (1995) seems a step backwards, a somewhat wayward attempt to revive the rock musical. Adams shows that he can write emotive ballads, and the piece does call for the kind of one-off ensemble mentioned above, but at least as presented here (most of the music, none of the spoken dialogue) it sounds schematic. No doubt Adams sees it as a necessary experiment, a means to get beyond opera and all the limitations implied by that over-burdened word.

I'm no keener on the electropop doodles of *Hoodoo Zephyr* (1992), which Adams describes as "an album of compositions made entirely in the realm of digital samples and FM synthesis". Only three of the pieces are included here and, although Adams writes about them with persuasive fondness, they sound to me like attempts to recreate "real instruments" electronically rather than journeys through newly imagined soundworlds.

By contrast, both *Chamber Symphony* (1992) and *John's Book Of Alleged Dances* (1994) use physical instruments in wholly idiosyncratic ways. The former refashions the jittery soundworld of Tex Avery cartoons for the kind of orchestra Schoenberg used in his chamber symphonies; the latter adds prepared piano samples to string quartet (Kronos). Both show Adams at his wittiest, unrepentantly tonal and fiercely inventive.

Only about 50 minutes of the music on these CDs is not already available on Nonesuch, but as a summary of 25 years of composing, it's a valuable retrospective. I'd rather approach Adams through individual pieces than consume every last morsel: I admire his open-hearted energy, but don't find it uniformly represented across more than ten hours of music. When it is, though, Adams is a real original, impure and far from simple.

NICK KIMBERLEY

Gerard Malanga
Up From The Archives
SUB ROSA SR170 CD

New York poet, film maker and photographer Gerard Malanga has had a full and varied career. During the 60s he was part of Andy Warhol's Factory, where he would assist by pulling the artist's silkscreen images on to canvas by day, and then metamorphose at night to become the fabled whip dancer for The Velvet Underground's legendary Exploding Plastic Inevitable performances.

Being a face at the Factory brought him into contact with a steady procession of 60s celebrities, artists, poets and oddballs, a selection of whom have been collected together on this trawl through Malanga's sound archives. In the sleevenotes he explains that *Up From The Archives* is defined by the work of Willard Maas, Peter Hartman and Angus MacLise, three American poets whose lives and work have affected him both creatively and spiritually. All three are represented here, with a tone poem for piano by Hartman (commissioned by Malanga for his 1967 film *In Search Of The Miraculous*, recorded by fellow Factory photographer Billy Name), a recording of Maas reading "His Image In The Snow" for the Library of Congress in Washington DC, and of greatest interest, perhaps, a fragment of music from the former VU drummer Angus MacLise's "Cloud Asylum", which acts as a sidebar to the Siltbreeze label's new CD of previously unissued and rare MacLise recordings *The Invasion Of Thundetbolt Pagoda*.

Other reasons to own this fascinating document are "The Recording Of *Couch*" which rounds up and eavesdrops on such old school Beat gods as Jack Kerouac, Allen Ginsberg, Gregory Corso and Peter Orlovsky in conversation with Malanga, Warhol and Factory worker Taylor Mead. Although ephemeral in content, the creative chaos and beatnik humour that ensues from this amiable confrontation of raw literary and artistic talent is electric with bohemian atmosphere.

Equally enthralling is Malanga's discussion with William Burroughs about the use of dreams in his work, together with live performances and video soundtrack readings of the poet's own verse — where he splashes spoken word pictures over sheets of shifting noise to great effect — plus a rare recording of American surrealist poet Charles Henri Ford shakily reciting three haikus into the microphone of Philippe Franck.

Best of all, however, are the contributions by Iggy Pop and Thurston Moore, which provide a somewhat welcome musical interlude amid the spoken word, while also successfully netting the mood of the era. Iggy's explosive untitled guitar bomb reverently (and humorously) recreates the early sound of The Stooges to such an extent that it might be a hitherto unknown relic salvaged from the group's 1969 New York City debut album sessions. Elsewhere Moore's moving (and also untitled) guitar/amp drone finale is fired with the spirit of the Exploding Plastic Inevitable, capturing perfectly the frozen beauty of the moment when The Velvets were taking rock music to its very limits, accompanied by the whipcracking rhythmic drive of the young Malanga. The poet, dancer and dreamer's thoughtfully constructed self portrait reveals as much about the 60s art/music scene and its prime movers as it does about the man himself.

EDWIN POUNCEY

Mass
From Zero
PARATACTILE PLE11052 CD

Since their inception last year, Mass, a UK trio made up of guitarist Gary Smith, percussionist Lou Ciccotelli, and Gary Jeff on bass and live electronics, have speedily moved on from their self-titled debut which, though it was charged with promise, was weighted down with too many props from the 70s improvisation circuit to really lift off. Their

second studio effort, *From Zero*, is a massive improvement. Better recorded, its clarity of sound brings out the sharper, more decisive and defined performances from all three players. Smith's stereo guitar credit is no gimmick: more than simply doubling his attack capability, it effectively provides him with a 360° launchpad, not to mention the more expansive range of tones and colours opened up between his two leads. His guitar flutters and swoops across these 17 pieces like some electric death's head moth, urged on by the bludgeoning fusion bass of Gary Jeff, who occasionally swats out at him with savage bursts of electronic rage. Although Jeff never hits his target, the ensuing mock battle between growling guitar and maddened machine makes for an intensely entertaining listening experience.

Holding the music together is Lou Ciccotelli's impassioned drum beat which again goaded and guided by Jeff's bass moves effortlessly from jazz fusion beat to the kind of free jazz thrash control that Rashied Ali displayed prominently alongside Keiji Haino and Bill Laswell as part of Purple Trap. A similar exploratory vibe guides *From Zero*, where each member strives to find fresh openings within their maze of tightly constructed improvisations, injecting their individual contributions with enough awareness of the others' movements to prevent the music collapsing into total chaos. For one, *From Zero* has a beat that you can nod to — a rare thing indeed for such an improvisational record — yet Smith's trio stubbornly refuses to pursue it down a more commercial road. Alive with ideas and bursting with controlled self-confidence. Mass sound, fresh and unstoppable.

EDWIN POUNCEY

Russell Mills/Undark

Pearl + Umbra

BELLA UNION BELLACD13 CD

Appropriately for a record made by a notable visual artist and who credits himself here as 'sculptor and producer', listening to *Pearl + Umbra* is more like wandering through a gallery of installations than listening to a conventional album. Its pieces evoke rather than describe, suggesting moods through contrasted textures and carefully situated tones. Impossible to pigeonhole, it's a genuinely experimental enterprise, but one that operates with wit and warmth rather than making a fetish out of obscurity.

It even has some actual songs, though their subject matter remains opaque. David Sylvian lends his bereaved croon to "Rooms Of The 16 Shimmers", "Golden Hair" is gorgeously sung by Clodagh Simonds, and "Shed Lustre" takes vocalist Ali Foster on a journey from Cocteau Twins country to the rougher regions near Bjork's last album. The Cocteaus' influence is to be expected, since Robin Guthrie plays on several tracks, is listed as 'sonic mandarin' and co-owns the label releasing it.

The rollcall of other collaborators is almost daunting. Mills has an impressive address book, with Thurston Moore, Peter Gabriel, Harold Budd, ex-Wire member Graham Lewis and Bill Laswell (superb on bass throughout) just the tip of an avant-celebrity iceberg. The most telling contributor of all is Brian Eno (on whose songs Mills once based a series of pieces), since Mills's disdain for rules, his love of sound for sound's sake, even his fondness for fancy credits (fulcrum beats, honey guitars, bunker emissions) are all distinctly Enoid. Anyone who ever marveled at *Another Green World* will find *Pearl + Umbra* a striking assemblage of enfolding surprises.

ANDY MEDHURST

Pharoahe Monch

Internal Affairs

RAWKUS P50138 CD/2XLP

Pharoahe Monch has long been one of HipHop's most expressive spokesmen. As one half of Organized Konfusion, he has produced a trio of albums which, in their mixture of relentless verbal gymnastics and boundary stretching musical innovation, can hold their own against anything in HipHop. Yet label politics and commercial failures dogged the duo and shattered Monch's beliefs. A debut solo album featuring vocal contributions by Busta Rhymes, Common and Black Thought of The Roots, and production assistance from DJ Premier and Diamond D, might suggest an over-reliance on others' abilities. But he proves more than a match even for this line-up.

Monch is one of the most multi-faceted MCs around, and he brings several of his skills to bear on *Internal Affairs*. One of his greatest strengths is his ability to inhabit totally whatever character he chooses to place centre stage: you will not hear a brasher, more vulgar paean to unadulterated pleasure than "Simon Says", yet it is immediately followed by "Queens", a lyrically tender and very moving portrait of daily life in urban Black America. Another is his sheer dizzying syntax, with its bewildering list of athletics references: "Official" does for sports what Organized Konfusion did for statistics on "Numbers" (*The Equinox*).

As the title suggests, this album represents a look inside Monch's mind. At first, both musically and lyrically, it's a fairly dark place. Tracks like "Rape", with its nasty lyric, and "Behind Closed Doors", where minor key piano and muted clarinets echo despair, are about as dark as it gets. Yet, as the album progresses, Monch achieves some sort of catharsis, both lyrically in the rowdy humour of the aforementioned "Simon Says" and "The Ass", and musically in the standout, trumpet soaked flamenco influences of "The Next Shit", featuring Rhymes in full millennial fervour. By the final, plaintive pleas for self-awareness in "The Truth", you get the feeling that he's achieved some kind of peace.

PETER McINTYRE

75 min original lofi - christmas - electronica by: Komeit, Die Weltraumforscher, Barbara Morgenstern, Bodo Elsel, Buschmusik, Contriva, Daniel Johnson, Thomas Fehlmann, Surf, Rank, Klaus Beyer, Felix Kubin, Quarks, Hausmeister, Wachtel Optimal, The Lala Vox Box, SpVgg Breitbarth, Harald Sack Ziegler u Frank S. Blumm, Nova Huta, Rabe, Leif, Gudrun Gut. > monika12 <

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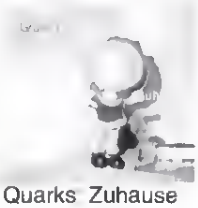
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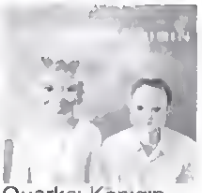
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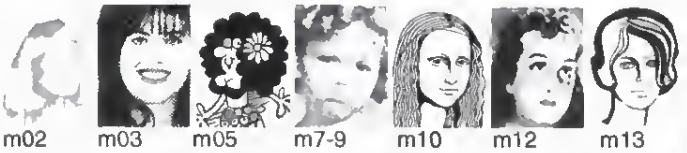
Barbara Morgenstern
m05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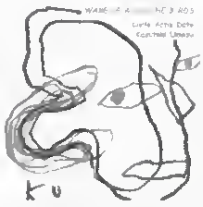

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Motor Totemist Guild
City Of Mirrors
CUNEIFORM RECORDS RUNE 116 CD

In the press notes to *City Of Mirrors*, US composer and multi-instrumentalist James Grigsby cites the influence of late 40s/early 50s US jazz composer Bob Graettinger, in particular his "astounding stylistic mixes" subsequently collected on the Stan Kenton album *City Of Glass* on Capitol Jazz. Renowned for big band swing, Kenton went out on a limb by commissioning work from the young Graettinger, whose jazz meets avant garde classical compositions for Kenton's 40 piece Innovations In Modern Music Orchestra, still sound remarkably audacious 50 years later: their multilayered density and dissonances having more in common with the work of Charles Ives than Duke Ellington.

Although Grigsby can't boast a 40 piece orchestra, this latest and largest line-up of his Motor Totemist Guild draws on the services of 15 musicians, and their collective cries and rich palette of instrumental colour certainly achieve big band stature. Where Graettinger's eclectic writing offended past critics, Grigsby's polystylistic inventions, which reserve space for free improvisation, seem perfectly at home in our postmodern 90s. Yet, one shouldn't take for granted his disciplined, dexterous idiomatic interplay. "Tower Of London", a beautifully written big band song with a regal renaissance air, recounts the alleged murder of the 'little princes' by Richard III. Scarfnet and Narcotic Lollipop deftly combine Latin and swing rhythms, lean avant-chamber lines, free jazz reeds, and shades of *Studio Tan* era Zappa. 'Prudes Vs Libertines' also recalls Zappa (and Nancarrow): this time his convoluted works for synclavier, while the 30 minute 'Bixby Slough' is a fine example of directed improvisation, the melodic cohering nicely with the abstract.

CHRIS BLACKFORD

Oneida
Enemy Hogs
TURNBUCKLE TB018 CD

Decked out in a beautiful sleeve which pictures an American eagle mercilessly crushing a basketful of bad eggs beneath the motto Death To All Traitors, New York quartet Oneida's debut long player *Enemy Hogs* looks fantastic. Complete the picture with a list of nom-de-plumes including Hanoi Jane and Kid Millions, and the scene is set for a furious lesson in righteous 'rockin' American power play in the ballroom tradition of The MC5 and The Make-Up.

The opening instrumental "Whitey Fortress" delivers the goods via sand-baked organ sounds and crisp tremolo guitar, while a lonesome foghorn leads, phases and wasps through the mix at air raid heights. Further in and things get more problematic. "Primanti Bass" is a throwaway piece of cheese like Bis at breakneck speed only not as funny. The gormless humour of nerdy art rockers Devo seems to have permanently damaged these guys, and their frenetic vocal jabs give you the feeling they were delivered with their eyes studiously crossed. The group's so self-conscious they're paralysed, rendering all their attendant imagery as merely empty style mag fashioning -- at least The Make-Up have the guts to walk it like they talk it. As if to confirm your worst fears there's "Ginger (Bein' Free)", a nauseous electro ballad dedicated to an ex-Spice Girl for her 'bravery' in packing in her job. The presence of pyrotechnic trumpeter Dave Douglas on "Bombay Fraud" is therefore all the more puzzling, though his raspy fire breathing almost justifies the price tag. Brother JT, stoner king guitarist of the Twisted Village stable, also lends the proceedings some meat, but the trimmings are so utterly noxious (a choir of church boys all singing "Turn It Up Loud"? Can the laughter, guys, you're killing us) that a second whiff is enough to have you reaching for the nearest bucket. Comedy and rock simply don't go, unless you're sporting a large wig, a wrestling outfit and you're Handsome Dick Manitoba. And they're not.

DAVID KEENAN

Jim O'Rourke
Halfway To A Threeway
DOMINO RUG103T CD

Chicago based multi-musician Jim O'Rourke's ongoing insatiable appetite for improvisation (both as listener and player) has produced a vast body of work that tends to lurch from one influence to another, sometimes with alarmingly uneven results. On the plus side are the early records he made alongside David Grubbs as part of Gastr Del Sol, together with *Happy Days*, his John Fahey inspired tribute for Revenant, and *Bad Timing*, which O'Rourke's record company described at the time as being his 'pop album'. When he occasionally lets the mask of the 'serious improvisor' slip for a second and becomes more playful, a clearer picture of the man and his many muses gradually begins to take shape.

Halfway To A Threeway is one of O'Rourke's better records, a short but undeniably sweet tableau of three songs and an irritatingly catchy instrumental, all of which have the power to crawl under the skin. Traces of Fahey, the Brian Wilson/Van Dyke Parks partnership, the late Bryan Maclean of Love fame, and UK folk lord Donovan whimsically weave and whisper throughout these finely tuned and arranged compositions.

The instrumental 'Not Sport, Martial Art" and "The Workplace" are shot through with the kind of dreamily constructed pop soundscapes that wash through Joe Hisaishi's work for director/actor 'Beat' Takeshi Kitano's new genre of Japanese gangster movies. In films like *Boiling Point* and *Sonatine*, the sublime innocence of the music adds an extra dimension to the onscreen violence, humour and empathy. O'Rourke has seemingly employed a similar contrast to turn the delicate mechanism of his latest invention

Whatever, *Halfway To A Threeway* adds up to the guitarist embarking on a new somewhat more commercially angled adventure which could give him the same kind of fame overground that he currently enjoys on the underground circuit

EDWIN POUNCEY

Charlemagne Palestine
Schlingen-Blangen
NEW WORLD RECORDS 80578-2 CD

"A work like *Schlingen-Blangen* is hard to describe because so little happens in it," writes composer Ingram Marshall in the excellent sleevenotes that accompany this first recording (I believe) of Charlemagne Palestine's 1979 epic. Marshall, who accompanied Palestine on a music-finding mission to the Far East in 1971, is well-placed to chart the development of his colleague's music. Like Terry Riley or, more specifically, La Monte Young, Palestine is a composer of a particular experimental generation. And while *Schlingen-Blangen* clocks in at only 71 continuous minutes (hardly a ripple on the face of time as far as Young's exhaustive and exhausting works are concerned), its qualities are also unique to the composer himself.

So what happens? *Schlingen-Blangen* (the title incidentally, is chosen for the rhythmic powers it invokes) is a single work, first realised on a Dutch organ. It takes the form of a sustained chord that opens out by increments to an unbelievably wonderful sonic architecture. There is, save for the internal oscillation of the piece, no rhythm to speak of. It is as if *Schlingen-Blangen* rises through its own lightness of being. It is above all music requiring patience: to look back now on the days of The Theatre Of Eternal Music, or even Philip Glass's all-night concerts delivering *Music In Twelve Parts*, is to see something heroic in the listening capacity of an audience. To poach Pauline Oliveros's useful phrase, Palestine requires deep listening. But even without wading in too far, there is an ocean of sound in this work, which explores the colour and vibrancy inhabiting what initially comes over as an undifferentiated tone. It is also about a precision of sound as much as its hallucinatory aspects. As the organ's notes — there is an immense spatial feel about this recording — begin to sound their own decay, one hears horns, waves of phased, rich material. A sublime experience.

LOUISE GRAY

Papa M
Live From A Shark Cage
DOMINO WIG71 CD LP

Dave Pajo has renamed his Aerial M group for this mock-live album. If it has a rawer edge than Pajo's previous releases, it does not sacrifice the subtlety of his delivery. A kind of modern instrumental folk-rock, Papa M's music is firmly guitar-based, involving minimalist repetitive patterns of a subtle, mesmerising quality.

At times the instruments sound exposed and isolated, particularly on the extended "I Am Not Lonely With Cricket". Here twin guitars play out insistent, high refrains simultaneously competing with and complementing one another, while all the time peaking in intensity. The starkness of this setting heightens the raw fragility of the sound. Papa M's music never roars out its intent but maintains a steady level of drama, whether it be the more traditional dirge-like 'Knocking The Casket' with its closing banjo melody, or the raga-styled "Drunken Spree", where a contrast to the hard, sharp guitar lines is provided by a murmured vocal accompaniment. On this track the music takes on a subtle psychedelic hue, while elsewhere Papa M slip into a range of different genres without being constrained by any of them.

TOM SIDGE

People Under The Stairs
The Next Step
OM PROMO CD LP

People Under The Stairs — the Los Angeles duo of Thes One and Double K — will never win any prizes for invention. The music of their debut album adheres very firmly to the HipHop blueprint. Straightahead rhymes flow above turntable driven tracks, built from the funk and soul of the late 60s/early 70s, bedded down on rock steady beats and smooth breaks, and coloured by jazz inflected melodies. Rocket science? No. But after the headspinning lyrical complexities of someone like Mike Ladd, and the dense, claustrophobic productions of, say, DJ Vadim, there's a certain guilty pleasure in simply kicking back and listening to some smooth old school business.

Actually, the album offers two types of pleasure. The guilty type comes on tracks like "Mid City Fiesta" and "San Francisco Knights". Both feature that fluttering Wes Montgomery-style guitar that must be one of the oldest tricks in the Hiphop book. But, godammit, put it with those lazy, rounded beats and some laidback raps and it just works — so, if it ain't broke, don't fix it. A more righteous pleasure can be had on the odd exceptions employing more adventurous productions, amid a sonorous dreamsound. "Death Of A Salesman" floats a ghost voice in the background to haunt the frontline vocal, on "Wannabes", the cymbals are mixed so high they become the lead, trading places with the percussive voice. In this album's smooth waters, however, these tracks are merely rocks. They might provide some occasional exhilaration, but it's much more enjoyable simply floating downstream.

PETER McINTYRE

Iggy Pop
Nuggets
JUNGLE FREUDO74 2xCD

This intelligently compiled collection of rare late-period Stooges and solo Iggy demos, unreleased tracks, covers and live recordings spans the two decades of his 'lost psychotic era'. It opens with three previously unheard Iggy songs recorded in 1983 with The Cars' Ric Ocasek — "Fire Engine", "Warrior Tribe" and "Old Mule Skinner" — which push his sound into a totally new direction. "Old Mule Skinner" flips from rough tongued blues into psychedelic rock thunder, before finally mutating into some war whoops reminiscent of "Tomorrow Never Knows". Elsewhere, *Raw Power*-era Stooges let rip into dynamite renderings of "I Got A Right" and "Gimme Some Skin" — which Iggy's then manager, MainMan boss Tony Defries, turned down for the finished album. Further treats include Iggy crooning a nine minute version of the Harold Arlen/Johnny Mercer ballad "One For My Baby" to a boisterous Detroit audience in 1980, and his *New Values* line-up hammering out a totally bizarre "Batman Theme" in Paris, with Iggy cast as the caped crusader, and vocalist Jackie Clarke as his teenage sidekick Robin. At one point, Clarke asks, *"Hey Batman, what time is it?"* To which Iggy riposties, *"It's "Louie Louie" time for a bunch of pricks!"* Iggy's witty repartee is hardly Dorothy Parker, but his exuberant delivery raises a belly laugh. And for all its rough edges, the sheer energy and invention coursing through this collection makes up for any sonic imperfections.

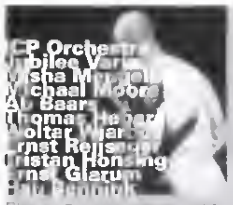
EDWIN POUNCEY

Ryuichi Sakamoto
BTTB
SONY SK89019 CD

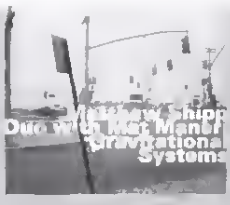
Ryuichi Sakamoto
Cinemage
SONY 607780 CD

In Japan at least, 1999 was Ryuichi Sakamoto's year. There was of course the success/excess (depending on your point of view) that was *Life: The Opera* and which spawned no less than four CDs: *Life In Progress*, *Raw Life Osaka*, *Raw Life Tokyo* and *Sampled + Raw Life*. There was the *Complete Index* of his work for Gut and three YMO remix albums. Then there was the surprise hit of the piano only single "Ura BTTB" (widely known as "Energy Flow") which sold more than a million copies and stayed at number one in Japan for five weeks. It was released as a taster for the album *BTTB*, which ironically didn't include the single. And finally, in case anyone had forgotten that Sakamoto did film music, he composed the soundtrack for Nagisa Oshima's long-awaited new movie *Gohatto*, and released a film music compilation *Cinemage*.

In sharp contrast to the multimedia extravaganza that was *Life*, *BTTB* is quite literally 'Back To The Basics'. This is, essentially, Sakamoto's homage to Erik Satie, made up of simple, flat, melodic vignettes plus — echoing the French composer's idiosyncrasies — some anomalies. "Choral No 1" and 'Choral No 2" are not (chorals, that is), "Do Bacteria Sleep?"



On first hearing this CD may sound to you like an ill-programmed mess, with the improvisations up front and the catchy numbers buried deep. But with ICP, over the long haul or short, the more you hear it, the more apparent its trajectory becomes, the more orderly and less chaotic it sounds. Or, the more you hear ICP's improvised "instant compositions" and their instant demolitions of Misha's highly whistlable tunes, the less clear it becomes what's order and what's chaos to begin with.



Shipp conceives of *Gravitational Systems* as the recording debut of a unique improvising configuration. First, this duo performance with the zealously gifted violinist Mat Maneri charts a natural progression from remarkable meetings on *By The Law Of Music*. Second, it's a logical piece of a larger puzzle that finds the pianist exploring and exploiting his concepts ... With *Gravitational Systems*, Shipp steps up a lively conversation that promises to keep listeners occupied well into the next century.

Misha Mengelberg came to Chicago for two days, made some music with a host of local and visiting Dutch musicians, and went home. Which leaves us with — what? Memories, certainly, but fortunately there's this stale left behind, these two CDs, containing a timeless message that anyone with ears can hear, now and in the future. Sounds that do not express, they signify, they exist.

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is echoed jaw's harp. Prelude and 'Sonata' are tuned percussion and the album ends with a sublime piano version of the old YMO standard "Tong Poo". The rest is pure Satie or when it gets a little more exercised Chopin. The simplicity is a relief after the supposed complexities of his electronic-World-opera-whatever excursions, which are sometimes not always — a little too knowing and mannered for their own good. Here, Sakamoto restricts his palette and revels in the discipline.

Given Sakamoto's lengthy and impressive filmography, *Cinemage* sells us short. No *High Heels*, *The Handmaids Tale*, *Love Is The Devil*, *Snake Eyes*, *The Sheltering Sky* or half a dozen other contenders. Instead we are offered six newly orchestrated 'suites' of three popular and three lesser known scores. Starting with the obvious ones first, *Merry Christmas Mr Lawrence* is represented by a new recording of David Sylvian crooning 'Forbidden Colours' while *The Last Emperor* and *Little Buddha* get tastefully straightforward orchestral treatments. *Wuthering Heights* is included, but has about as much going for it as its host film. Better is Replica: all vibraphones, smarting trombones and trilling flutes. It's Reich's *Desert Music* without the desert. But quite where the piece comes from I've no idea. The longest piece is saved till last, notably 'El Mar Mediterrani', Sakamoto's previously unreleased score for the opening ceremony of the 1992 Barcelona Olympics. The music is certainly vigorous, but misses its original visual association. A decent enough album as far as it goes, but at 48 minutes and omitting two thirds of his soundtrack oeuvre, *Cinemage* plainly doesn't go far enough.

DAVID ELLIOTT

Salaryman
Karoshi
CITY SLANG 08715 CD

The main problem with Salaryman is not their music. *Karoshi* contains 11 amiable, adequate, keyboard-driven instrumentals that are so inoffensive it's impossible to work up enough energy to actively dislike them. Some drone, some rumble, some would work as the theme tunes to some ironically retro science fiction series, and some could double as the second worst tracks on early Stereolab albums. It's all very neat, polite and tactful. American post-rock that Ross from the anodyne US sitcom *Friends* might like.

Behind the music, however, lie some highly questionable assumptions. As the electronic alter ego of American guitar dullards The Poster Children, Salaryman evidently think they have stumbled onto some brave new sonic world. They seem so wrapped up and delighted by their delusion of innovation (hey Ma, look, no guitars! Hardly any lyrics!) that it feels almost cruel to throw names like Kraftwerk, DAF and New Order at them. Coming on like college geeks who've just discovered rhythm, they sound like a woefully tardy echo of mid-period Talking Heads.

Salaryman are also convinced they are staging some sharp critique of capitalist drudgery. There's the group's name (Japan's generic term for salaried office workers), the album title (it means 'death from overwork' in Japanese), the way they use only initials rather than names to identify group members, the computer game of white collar clones versus dollar signs on the CD's enhanced video package. Here once again, predictability is passed off as groundbreaking, with the arch postmodernity of the packaging designed to cloak an ideological hypocrisy worthy of Phil Collins's 'Another Day In Paradise'.

But then without the trappings, the conceits and the pretend politics, all that's left is an album of outer space surf music, a handful of perfectly pretty little pieces that say all they can in eight bars, doodle around for four more minutes, and vanish without leaving a trace.

ANDY MEDHURST

Sand
Beautiful People Are Evil
SATELLITE STL27 CD

This York based group, founded by Hilary Jeffrey (trombone) and Tim Wright (electronics and programming), explode across the speakers with the overdriven noise and beats of "Hello Mrs Apple". Unsurprisingly the rest of the album never quite matches the intensity of this opener, the only track to feature the dubious vocal talents of George Adamis. Broadly speaking, Sand cross-breed space- and jazz-rock with strong overtones of electronica. Their line-up also has room for two drummers, two bassists (one acoustic) and a guitarist; expansive enough to make suitably wide-ranging music a prerequisite.

"Dis Plane Down" is kept at a simmer, the odd explosions of noise aside, before it slips away into jazzier territory, the slower 'Hotel Cotty' allows the group more space to stretch out on its bed of bass-heavy rhythm and reverberating trombone, and "Terminus" works up a compelling low end groove. In places Sand drift into less eclectic, less adventurous territory — as on 'Spell" and the fairly straight 'Sand" — but these are forgivable lapses, next to such powerful cosmic explorations as "Product Crow" and "Vertigo Crab".

TOM RIDGE

The Science Group
A Mere Coincidence
RER RECOMMENDED SCIENCE 1 CD

Bob Drake
Medallion Animal Carpet
CRUMBLING TOMES ARCHIVE CTA7 CD

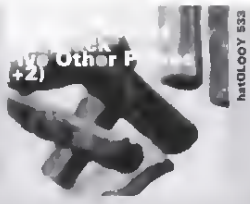
Chris Cutler & Thomas Dimuzio
Quake
RER RECOMMENDED CC1D 1 CD

Lurking behind the rather portentous moniker The Science Group is a bunch of UK/US avant-rock grandees: Chris Cutler, Amy Denio, Bob Drake and Fred Frith, plus clarinettist Claudio Puntin and multi-instrumentalist Stevan Tickmayer, who is responsible for most of the compositions on *A Mere Coincidence*. Those who know and love the complex polystylism of Cassiber, Thinking Plague, Motor Totemist Guild and 5uu's will find much to admire in the work of The Science Group, who explore/explode songform with a tortuous multilayered harmonic and rhythmic intensity that few could even dream of, let alone execute. The songs are not without a tunefulness either, albeit somewhat oblique. Drake's role as producer and mixer (as well as vocalist/guitarist/percussionist) ensures that the final outcome unobtrusively knits the played and studio-manipulated elements, though in Drake's remarkably innovative hands it makes sense to talk of him 'playing' the recording studio. Cutler's science orientated lyrics (a recondite region of songwriting that Peter Hammill has been traversing for 30 years) provide the conceptual glue, his meditations on love ("*the math has it already mapped*") identity and nothingness ease the jargon into evocative, gnomic strophes. This substantial work demands repeat hearings.

Bob Drake's previous solo album, *Little Black Train* was one of my favourite recordings of 1996 for the way his studio wizardry radically reshaped and defamiliarised its unlikely ingredients of C&W/bluegrass, country rock and Prog. *Medallion Animal Carpet* is another studio project using more or less the same ingredients but with a greater emphasis on songs (bizarre lyrics courtesy of Spagetti, a random sentence generator). Drake's high tessitura vocals invite comparisons with Yes's Jon Anderson, and from time to time you'd be forgiven for thinking that shredded fragments of that old 'supergroup' had crept into the mix. His sound design is deliberately unpolished, a cunningly crafted, stereophonic textural wonderland (or perhaps nightmare) that the untutored ear would mistake for a complete and utter shambles. Bass/treble levels oscillate wildly, some instruments are cranked up to distortion, while others (including vocals) are pushed far back in the mix or compressed into horrifyingly dense layers of turbulence. Irresistible work by a true original.

Last year saw the welcome reissue on ReR of *Headlock* (1989), the debut solo album by US electroacoustic composer Thomas Dimuzio, which is hallmarked by his sure handling of an expansive, yet detailed, sonic architecture crafted in the studio. However, *Quake* finds his samplers and processors feeding off Chris Cutler's percussion ('electrified' and otherwise) and sundry objects in two live improvised performances from March this year. Both events have been subdivided into numerous short, titled tracks, though in many cases the music appears to be continuous. Given the vampiric nature of the process, authorship of sounds is not always easily attributable, but the

We've been a band for four years now. Even so, we are only just beginning to get to the point where I feel like we have a real past on which we can build. In the process we learn what it means to play music, communicate with an audience and make documents along the way. You, the listener, are an integral and essential part of it all. Thanks for joining us in that process. Ellery Eskelin



As with *One Great Day* . (hatOLOGY 502) and *Kulak 29 & 30* (hatOLOGY 521) this recording was made upon the culmination of a combined US and European tour lasting about a month. It's been a pleasure bringing our music to points far and wide and we look forward to continuing that process. Maybe we'll meet you at a future concert, if so, please say hello ... *Ellery Eskelin*

Maybe it helps to know that Han and Ellery are both good chess players. Bennink favors an offensive game to be sure, but Eskelin is conspicuously untraumatized, knowing that with Bennink (switched metaphor ahead) the idea is not to steer the bull but to keep from being thrown. And Han, to his audible pleasure, discovers a rare, fully equipped improviser he can't scare off, wear out, bury or give the slip.

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Grateful Dead

So Many Roads (1965-1995)

GRATEFUL DEAD/ARISTA GDCD4066 5XCD

The Grateful Dead

On 9 August 1995 after 30 years of faithful service to the music, Grateful Dead guitarist Jerry Garcia left this planet, taking with him one of the greatest groups of the 20th Century. Lesser outfits would have found a replacement and carried on touring and recording, but Garcia was irreplaceable and his death forced The Dead to call it a day. But their spirit survives them through such offshoots as the surviving members' group mutation called The Other Ones, guitarist Bob Weir's Ratdog combo and bassist Phil Lesh & Friends troupe (featuring ex Jefferson Airplane/Hot Tuna guitarist Jorma Kaukonen).

Meanwhile, the void left by Garcia and The Dead's passing has been partially filled by the ongoing Dick's Picks series of concert recordings, which got up to 15 volumes before the death this year of curator Dick Latvala threw the project into temporary disarray. The shows which Dick picked beamed dazzling new light on the group that many had rashly and unwisely dismissed long ago as a by-product of 60s hippydom. Away from the recording studio (an environment where they always felt uncomfortable) the sound of The Dead soared into a different dimension where blues, bluegrass, Western swing, 50s rock 'n' roll, R&B, psychedelic rock, World musics and free jazz improvisation were incorporated into their epic jams to create music that at once deepened the consciousness and quickened the pulse rate. The use of hallucinogenics was — and still is — purely optional. More importantly, The Dead's music (much of it featuring Robert Hunter's cryptic yet fascinating lyrics) eschewed fashion, had no dress code, age limit or rule book. On the contrary, it concentrated on breaking down musical barriers to free the minds and creative energies of all those who were touched by what they heard.

This epochal five CD box set of previously unreleased live/studio recordings and rehearsals spanning the group's 30 year haul takes its lead from Dead archivist Dick Latvala's pioneering series. Assembled by longtime Dead supporters David Gans, Blair Jackson, Steve Silberman and Latvala, it kicks off in fine style with "Can't Come Down" and "Caution (Do Not Step On The Tracks)", recorded when they were still The Warlocks for San Francisco label Autumn Records in 1965. Although the name didn't last, some of the songs they were performing during this early transitional stage would go on to become concert mainstays. "Caution" eventually became one of the constituent jams making up the first section of the group's second album, the concrète-psychedelic masterpiece *Anthem Of The Sun*. This young, loud and snotty early version sounds like it is being ripped into by a gutsy *Nuggets* styled garage punk group. The kind of evolution such songs went through in The Dead's formative years can be heard while it is actually happening on this set's extended version of the Garcia penned "Cream Puff War" (which appeared in a more truncated form on their 67 debut album *Grateful Dead*). The way they melt its garage rock core into a freeflowing fluid raga guitar improvisation anticipates such ground quaking compositions as "Dark Star", "The Eleven" and "China Cat Sunflower". The aftershock of this rapid development in the group's sound rumbles through to disc two's opening acid attack "That's It For The Other One" — recorded live in San Francisco during part of the same 1969 sessions that produced their definitive *Live/Dead* double album — where the main players' jug band roots have mutated into a hydra-headed psychedelic symphony, driven wilder still by their much missed keyboards playing blues singer, the late Ron 'Pigpen' McKernan's serrated edged organ flourishes and the tapestry of rhythms woven by drummers Bill Kreutzmann and Mickey Hart throughout the ebb and flow of Garcia and Weir's molten lava guitar explosions.

Alas, not everything contained on these five discs sustains this quality. Disc three is fleshed out with somewhat flat sounding, crack-throated and annoyingly truncated edits of live renditions of *Wake Of The Flood/Blues For Allah* material from the mid-70s which — a particularly memorable and somnambulistic performance of "Stella Blue" aside — on, first listen, are mostly uneventful.

Discs four and five are similarly inconsistent. In addition, they're further blighted with rock 'n' roll styled vocal contributions from The Dead's third keyboardist Brent Mydland (who died of a drug overdose in 1990) and Weir. The version included here of the latter's anthemic "Playing In The Band" — one of The Dead's most enduring launchpad pieces despite its lyric's hackneyed premise — eventually sprouts improvised wings and ascends towards that same higher plane where John Coltrane used to take Walt Disney's "Chim Chim Cheree". Also of note is the version of Garcia's "Bird Song", where The Dead are joined on stage by mainstream jazz saxophonist Branford Marsalis, whose presence pushes the others towards even lofter improvisational heights, until they sound as though they are going to burst with the sheer joy of playing together.

The final disc covers the group's erratic late period. Among its series of jams and rehearsals are a curious reworking of Irish folk song "Whiskey In The Jar" (an Alan Lomax discovery that was famously roughed up by pub rockers Thin Lizzy) and an emotionally fired "Days Between", the last song Garcia and Hunter wrote together. Rich with Hunter's darkly glittering lyrical gems and shakily growled by an ailing, bear-like Garcia, their swansong is also one of their best — up there with such Garcia-Hunter greats as "Box Of Rain".

Moments like "Days Between", along with the essential early cuts scattered across the early discs, make *So Many Roads* a rewarding journey for Deadheads and newcomers alike. The latter will soon learn how The Dead's flaws, noticeable throughout this box, are as illuminating as their breakthroughs. With The Dead, a burn note or a tortured vocal might suddenly trigger a soulstirring improvisation that consumes the musicians' personalities, leaving only the music hanging in the air.

EDWIN POUNCEY

PHOTO PICTORIAL PRESS

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"I Saw It! That Which Before I Could Only Sense..."
Brand new studio double from the heaviest of all Japanese groups
PARATACTILE 2CD PLE1 [illegible]

BILL DIXON & TONY OXLEY
"Papyrus"
Trumpet and percussion hardcore improvisation duo
SOUL NOTE CD: 121 [illegible]

MOROCCO
"Sacred Drums From Marrakesh"
62 minute drum ritual marking the start of the lunar calendar
INSTITUT DU MONDE ARABE CD: 321020

DAVID WATSON
"Skirl"
Bagpipes with harp, percussion, etc. Musicians include [illegible] Baptista, Tony Buck, Jim Pugliese a.o.
AVANT [illegible] AVAN077

CAPE VERDE
"An Archipelago Of Music"
31 tracks, 17 genres of music with comprehensive text and photography
OCORA 2CD BOOK. C560146/47

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general impression is of Cutler's abrasive percussives and gritty electrics supplying the microsonic detail with Dimuzio expanding these textures and unleashing his own ominous stormcloud drones. The result is intelligently paced decidedly atmospheric noise-mongering.
CHRIS BLACKFORD

Richard Scott
One Hundred Love Songs
SRUTI BOX CD20 CD

Richard Scott's solo album is a quiet triumph, a culmination of almost ten years' exploration of the soprano sax. Musical reference points audible here are Steve Lacy's magisterial improvisations, Jimmy Giuffre's artful understatement on clarinet, and the Japanese shakuhachi flute. A free improvisor and promoter based in Manchester Scott has also taken on board contemporary masters of hardcore Improv like Peter Brotzmann and John Butcher. But in stark contrast to say, the austere multiphonics and edgy tone colorations of Butcher, Scott's playing is a cool mix of sexy, mellow colours and a disciplined approach to melodic phrasing. In fact, Scott's limpid way with a phrase is what makes him really stand out.

Here is a player who has examined the extremes of contemporary playing, and then carefully built a music of contemplative beauty upon a base of jazz sensibility. I realise this maybe makes Scott sound like Chorlton's answer to Jan Garbarek. In practice Scott relies very little on long notes, and enjoys unleashing abrupt outbreaks of seething and snarling. His meditation is quite dynamic and muscular — sax playing as a martial art, perhaps. In among the improvised pieces are a handful of tuneful compositions, and one involving electronic delays, the dreamy 'Outbreath" which closes the album. I enjoyed the distant sound of stumbling audience which enhances the Giuffre tribute "Little Feet". And I like the way that the "Tagore Suite" is named not after the Indian poet but a road in Manchester.

Declaring an interest here I confess that the best piece on the album is the brief shakuhachi-style invocation dedicated to myself. Anyway, we'll have to make do with the album for a while, as Scott is currently taking a break from live performance to concentrate on drum 'n' bass production.
CLIVE BELL

DJ Speedranch ^ Jansky Noise
Live @ The Scala 25/03/99
AC^P10001 CD

A faxed memo from Cargo Records says this CD contains Audiomulch a real-time intreractive computer environment for Windows 95 allowing users to assemble audio sources and effects for themselves. Discovering that the floppy attached to the package has seeped glue beneath the metallic tab doesn't encourage confidence in the software, so we'll have to stick to assessing the CD only.

DJ Speedranch's bout with Jansky Noise at the Scala in London's Kings Cross in March was recorded onto MiniDisc by Tim Rice (no, not that one or at least, I don't think so). We are invited to "experience the conflicting mass of orders presented and ask yourself why these profound mechanisms continue to dissolve the code". The sound of overdriven equipment is the basic material — a continuous white noise roar — which is then twisted and shaped, with occasional hiccups dropouts and talkovers acting as punctuation. As the piece persists, weird high-whistling harmonics resembling throatsinging are discernible. It suggests someone battling to weld a joint in a wind tunnel, the stream of air changing in tone as limbs move against the current. This element of physical exertion provides a drama that prevents interest flagging and leads to the suspicion that there's more than careless feedback abuse at the core of the music.

Indeed, although the Merzbowish violence of the sound seems to disdain such considerations there is a satisfying shape to the whole. After the performance collapses into sarcastic chanty shop Easy Listening in abominable hi-fi — cueing applause from a handful of noiseniks — there are some 'loops for termination of signal', raw effects that have none of the emotional impetus of what has gone before. Despite leaning towards post-human absolutism DJ Speedranch And Jansky Noise have perpetrated something in public that makes a change. For a music that wants you to hate it, that must be counted as an achievement.
BEN WATSON

Splinks
Consensus
KONTRANS 1545 2XCD

The Netherlands seem to breed ensembles that combine flinty toughness with potently expressive oddness. Splinks certainly has that character and *Consensus* is a tour de force wilfully coupling taut forms with intrinsically disruptive energies. Tangible control constantly teeters on the brink of anarchic abandon, but never quite succumbs. By the end of the second disc, it is clear that the music's antic acrobatics actually amount to a wonderfully poised balancing act.

Splinks is a 13 piece ensemble. Its trio of violinists includes Mary Oliver a member of The Ig Henneman String Quartet. An additional quartet of wind players includes tenor saxophonist Tobias Delius, whose group with Han Bennink brought the 1999 LMC Experimental Music Festival to a memorable close. Double bass guitar, synthesizer and two drummers complete the line-up. The 13th man and resident factor X is Jaap Blonk a sound poet adept at interpreting Dada, Futurist, and Fluxus texts. Solo CDs such as

Flux-De-Bouche (1993) and last year's *Vocalor* document that strand of his work, while other recordings have captured his improvising skills in company with musicians such as saxophonist Mats Gustafsson and cellist Fred Lonberg-Holm Blonk's declamations and incantations are diverting in their absurdity, throwing his voice through hoops in a style that attests to both its agility and extensive range He is decidedly a performing poet in the mould of the great Bob Cobbing, rather than an expressionistic singer like Phil Minton

Here the texts are his own and his instrumental compositions evidently develop from their idiosyncratic articulations But *Consensus* is nonetheless a massive ensemble jazz work Blonk's imaginative orchestration is elaborated by his still more imaginative production work, which artfully shapes a series of remarkably heterogeneous pieces into the semblance of a suite Soloists are granted ample room Delius stretches out on "Cwmhir", trombonist Dieter Kuhlmann purrs and growls on "Puy La Gorge", Angelo Verploegen's fluegelhorn and Alison Isadora's violin weave lyrical figures on "Hotel Vergetelheid" The obvious danger is that a sound poet's work will be marginalised by jazz listeners, but no one with a lively interest in contemporary jazz composition should miss *Consensus*

JULIAN COWLEY

Squarepusher
Selection Sixteen
WARP WARPCD72 CD

Putting a 13 track 'mini album' on the market may appear to be playing fast and loose with definitions, but when it also contains an extra four unlisted remix numbers, the whole thing begins to look as if someone s having a laugh However well meant, such generosity inevitably comes with a hefty price tag In this case, it manifests itself around about a third of the way into Squarepusher's latest release, when quality control suddenly takes a dive headfirst out the studio window

The bubbling and squelching 330 kicks of "Square Rave" and "Dedicated Loop", and the fragile melodic peeks of "Tomorrow World" manage to keep interest levels pretty high up to this point, but from here on in, a dispiriting combination of lazy guitar lines, noodling funk bass and listless drumming takes over Jocular, self-indulgent chat amongst the musicians and compositions dreamy encumbered with titles such as "Freeway" and "Yo" hardly improve matters either "Snake Pass" has a four-square Planet E feel to it, but its relentless acid loops contain little you haven't heard before Meanwhile, "Mind Rubbers" comes across as an over-burdened parody of nosebleed breakbeats and bad boy posturing which doesn't so much labour its message as weary it Equally noisy and pointless are the two "B Bit Mix" tracks, whose squeals and bangs go nowhere fast, and the lumpy antics of "Schizm Track #2 Mix" Belatedly, Andy Jenkinson's "Ceephax Mix" gets the blood pumping once again, but the cumulative effect of its muscular rhythms and blunt, impacted textures are curtailed by an abrupt throwaway ending Sometimes more really is less

KEN HOLLINGS

Sun Ra Arkestra/The Cairo Jazz Band/Cairo Free Jazz Ensemble
The Sun Ra Arkestra Meets Salah Ragab In Egypt
LEO GOLDEN YEARS OF NEW JAZZ GY1 CD

Sun Ra
Cosmos
SPALAX SPALAXCD14561 CD

Two new reissues from a back catalogue as labyrinthine as the canals of Mars So bewildering has the cartography become that we now require the services of fulltime astro-geographers like Robert L Campbell and Hartmut Geerken as guides

Geerken's sleevenotes to the Golden Years reissue prove that sometimes dreaming of lost cities is more enjoyable than actually finding them He paints a fascinating, if unlikely picture of how Ragab, a major in the music corps of the Egyptian army and a fanatical jazz fan/drummer, got together with ex-pat Czech musician Edu Vizvan and Geerken himself to form The Cairo Jazz Band The pick of the army's bandsmen was given a crash course in the aesthetics of jazz, while Geerken and Vizvan worked on the compositions and arrangements Schizophrenically, the band alternated between Basie-Adderley standards sets, and new compositions inspired by the cream of European avant jazz orchestras When Geerken invited Ra and the Arkestra to Egypt, Ragab supplied some compositions and sat in on drums With Ra's visit as an additional impetus, perhaps, a subgrouping of ten Egyptian soloists were coopted to form the often radically political Cairo Free Jazz Ensemble This story just seethes with intriguing questions on the interaction of modernity and tradition conservative institutions and revolutionary music, not to mention the delicious irony of conscientious objector Ra finally making it to his personal promised land only to find an American-styled big band led by the local military!

While the story may beguile, the music (not to mention the shockingly cynical and historically inaccurate name of the label) barely does it justice What we have is a reissue of an obscure split LP on the Greek Praxis label, one side of the Arkestra in a Cairo studio during their second trip to Egypt in 1983, the other of the Cairo Jazz Band live in the early 70s Considering the scores of more interesting Ra albums begging for reissue, it's a strange choice — though the label does attempt to make amends with the addition of an unissued 18 minute live version of the Arkestra's multi-percussive centrepiece "Watusa" from 1984, and the 16 strong Cairo Free Jazz Ensemble hurtling through "Music For Angela Davis" in 1971 Unfortunately, you sense the Arkestra is not quite at home on Ragab's two compositions, though the soloists are as professionally invigorating as ever, and Ra's delightful incursions on melodica display a startlingly fractured melodic sense The rougher recording of "Watusa" carries a whiff of cabaret self-parody The local lads fashion a passable facsimile of a big band that swings with a sub-Mingus sharpness at times, though the occasional Egyptian-flavoured rhythmic and melodic motifs hint at what might have been

The Spalax reissue of *Cosmos* is the first time it has been readily available on CD Recorded in Paris in August 1976, a month after the Arkestra played at the Montreaux Festival, the record originally apoeared on the French Cobra label The size of the studio limited Ra to only half of his touring band and the result is an intimately low-key performance, making it one of the best places to hear the leader on his soft and squelchy rocksichord Meanwhile, the flute-centred arrangements on many of the tunes conjure a suitably dreamy purple dawn backdrop for the strange shapes Ra is comping

ALAN CUMMINGS

David Sylvian
Approaching Silence
VIRGIN CDVE943 CD

Jansen/Barbieri/Karn
_ism
MEDIUM PRODUCTIONS MP9 CD

Steve Jansen & Yukihiro Takahashi
Pulse Remix
MEDIUM PRODUCTIONS MP10 CD

The four ghosts from Japan are struggling to produce anything remotely distinctive on this evidence Sylvian's *Approaching Silence* consists mainly of two half-hour ambient soundscapes for multimedia installations along similar lines to his 1989 collaboration with Holger Czukay, *Flux + Mutability* Sylvian's guitars, synthesisers shortwave and samples here blend with or soak alongside, firstly Frank Perry s bowed gong and finger bells and, on the title track, Robert Fripp's frippertronics Taken out of its installation context, the air surrounding this kind of Ambient seems rather thin, compared with *Flux + Mutability*, the atmospheres here are a touch more diffuse — soft mixed drones, fluently shifting and calmative, high gliding notes emerge out of an equilibrial tonal surf of soft attacks and teasing modulations Czukay is credited with supplying some sample material — perhaps the snatches of hill tribe singing which grace the music here like a Chinois wallpaper motif Buddhist

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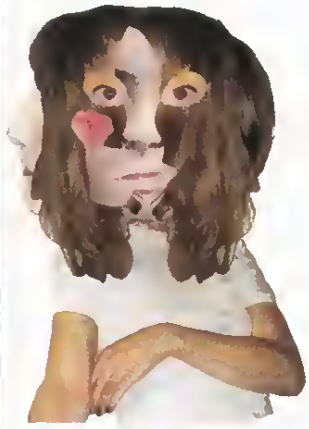

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the boomerang

New reissues: rated on the rebound

Begun in the winter of 1964 and completed the following spring, ***Harry Partch***'s *Delusion Of The Fury* (Sony Music/Innova 406 CD) was Partch's last major work and the most audacious in its theatrical integration of effects. Structured entirely around his hand-built orchestra's onstage presence, its narrative brings together two folk tales on the twinned themes of reconciliation and justice. The first, derived from an Arthur Waley translation of a Japanese Noh play, concerns the uneasy ghost of a warrior slain in battle; the second is an Ethiopian parable of a quarrel resolved by a deaf and near-sighted country judge.

Partch intended his score to be presented as a continuous, uninterrupted performance in which the dancers and singers moved among the instruments. An extended, brooding "Exordium" opens the piece, and a soulful "Sanctus", dominated by cascades of plucked strings and chromelodeons, serves as an entr'acte to divide the action. Virtually wordless, *Delusion* has none of the mystical dime-store lyricism of the Lost Musicians' conjurings in *The Bewitched* or the nine hitchhikers' inscriptions of *Barstow*. Its staging, however, still crackles with the same transcendental Yankee know-how. "We are reduced to specialities," the composer lamented shortly after this original 1969 recording was first completed. "A theatre of dialogue without music, and a concert of music without drama." From Partch's notes, however, it soon becomes clear that all other elements must remain subordinate to the demands of his microtonal instruments and their players.

On *The London Concert* (Cadillac SGC08/09 2xCD), recorded at the Collegiate Theatre in August 1978, tenor saxophonist ***David Murray*** is joined by Butch Morris on cornet, Curtis Clark on piano, Brian Smith on bass and Clifford Jarvis on drums. The ensemble style is post-free, as the musicians weld the expressive gestures of the 60s revolution to the sonorous musicianship of jazz-as-usual. Murray's revved-up, multi-hued, gospelised tenor is always exhilarating — cascades of sound modelled so closely on physical rapture it is uncanny — but the quintet sounds subdued, lacking either the pianoless starkness of *Flowers For Albert* (1976) or the buoyant, clashing arrangements of Murray's octet albums in the 80s. Enjoyable enough, but not quite the blast promised by rumour.

Now reduced to turning out smooth jazz wallpaper in various shades of bossa and beige, guitarist ***Larry Coryell*** was once a real contender. On neither of these 'I've heard Hendrix' recordings, *Lady Coryell* (1969, Vanguard VM06509 CD) and *Planet End* (1975, Vanguard VM079637 CD) does producer Danny Weiss give any indication that he knew how to record loud guitar. On both he creates a nervous, uneven sound quality that abruptly hollows at the peaks. It reminds the 90s listener — used to a panoply of recording techniques that domesticate volume — of that era's wild-eyed confrontation with noise. *Lady Coryell* is raw and sweet, Coryell using Bob Dylan's licence to sing even if you can't. He plays both guitar and bass, overdubbing bluesy jams without a hint of the pre-echoed luxuriousness which makes one yawn at the prospect of such a strategy today. His eclecticism is not the stuff of convincing music, but when Elvin Jones guests on drums ("Treats Style" and "Stiff Neck"), it hints at the sublime open-beat guitarism of Cream. *Planet End* erases any trace of busking charm, being a 100 notes a minute assault on Mount Fusion.

Virtuosity has never been one of New Zealand free rock group ***The Dead C***'s vices. Their creation myth has it that they assembled one afternoon in January 1987 and just played. The chemical reactions taking place that afternoon changed their lives and some of ours. *DR503C* (Flying Nun FNC0443 CD) collects material from their first 15 months, mostly sourced from long gone, yet still highly valued artefacts like *Live Dead See*, *The Sun Stabbed*, *Perform Max Harm*, *DR503* and *DR503B*. Hearing the corrosive "Sun Stabbed", recorded live, collapse in a flurry of fingers-on-blackboard feedback, it's not hard to see why they polarised audiences. But what seemed perverse then is acceptable now. The Dead C's early sound has been so absorbed into the fabric of contemporary music that post-rock would be unimaginable without them. The wilful primitivism, the sprawling, awkward melancholy, freakish moments of hostility, the hazy textures and languor, the summoning of precise emotional tones were all written up earlier in The Dead C's scrolls. Indeed, these moods and motifs are so familiar nowadays that discovering them on *DR503C* makes it work as an ersatz greatest hits package, even as it compiles the rare classics most people can't possibly have heard. "Bad Politics", especially, remains a small masterpiece of punk rock catharsis, disrupting the elegiac mood with a wild surge of aggression and spitefulness.

☐ *Reviewed by Ken Hollings, Philip Matthews and Ben Watson*

'enlightenment' might be the key theme here, but it's achieved too casually through escape into high-tech blonde wood peacefulness. The track with Fripp, originally staged in a zen temple, is weightier. The recurrent incident of a struck bell sets off a buddhist/Mahlerian blast of low brass drone which recedes like an ebbing tide releasing rogue harmonies and cadences. With this rather stately and mournful piece, it takes a while before you realise the whole thing is turning round on itself, again and again.

Meanwhile, Japan's other founding members — Mick Karn on bass, drummer Steve Jansen and Richard Barbieri on synthesisers and keyboards — lay claim in to a post-New Romantic halflife. On *_ism* they purvey a sculptural, glossy and somewhat moody set of pop-rock songs and instrumentals, with Zoe Niblett's vocals adding a Portishead touch. *Pulse Remix* showcases tracks by Jansen with and ex YMO member Yukihiro Takahashi in remixes by the likes of 4 Hero, DJ Spooky and Fantastic Plastic Machine. Unsurprisingly, this seemingly unlikely marriage (Japan plus drum 'n' bass) doesn't quite set the sparks flying for either party. The resulting offsprings are warm and jazzy drum 'n' bass chansons, with Spooky and 4 Hero swirling into the aesthetic backwash left by whatever it was that once made them disturbed and visionary.

MATT FFYTCHE

Ken Vandermark's Joe Harriott Project

Straight Lines

ATAVISTIC ALP11 5CD CD

The Polygram reissues of Jamaican born altoist Joe Harriott's groundbreaking early 60s records *Free Form* and *Abstract* at the end of last year seemed to spearhead a broad musical excavation programme encompassing important releases by Tony Oxley and Ray Russell on Sony and the long-awaited Joseph Holbrooke mini CD on Incus, that has provided many of us with a first-time opportunity to evaluate the nascent British free improvisation scene. By one of those strange quirks of synchronicity, peripatetic Chicagoan tenorist Ken Vandermark began his own recontextualisation of Harriott's music in the spring of 1998. The fruits of long hours transcribing tapes of the Harriott albums and of several gigs in Chicago are presented in this studio album.

While not entirely successful, Vandermark's run at half a dozen Harriott tunes are nevertheless terrifically engaging by any account. By losing the piano and replacing Shake Keane's sparkling trumpet from the original Harriott Quintet with Jeb Bishop's fat trombone, Vandermark effectively modernises the line-up. Crucially, without the frenetic forward motion and swing of Phil Seaman's drumming (Vandermark's drummer Tim Mulvenna is a lot sparser, and on occasion too heavy on the cymbals), the music is opened to new possibilities. It feels a lot looser and lighter, somehow less eager to blast through the heads and rip off stratospheric solos. But the hard-boppish rapid swing, the well-drilled tightness and fiery enthusiasm of Harriott's music also lend it much of its attractiveness and excitement. However, the impact of the unexpected Zorn-like jumpcuts, which were such a feature of Harriott's compositions, is somewhat lessened by Vandermark's more considered approach.

Of course, there is always a tendency to regard record performances in retrospect as somehow definitive or sacrosanct — but the reality is that most of us have no idea how Harriott's group might have transformed the pieces each night. While the comparisons are still useful, then, it is perhaps more valuable to look at this group on its own terms. On the plus side, Vandermark is to be lauded for steering well clear of the dangerous waters of 'tribute' playing — in general, he preserves the gorgeous melodic heads of the tunes, using them (as Harriott did) as enabling devices for the improvisations and arrangements. His own playing on tenor, clarinet and bass clarinet are as clearly focused and resourceful as ever. Yet for all the fine playing and new light shed on the originals, the project might have done better to stay in the clubs. But if Vandermark's championing deflects more attention onto Harriott's criminally overlooked music, that can only be a good thing.

ALAN CUMMINGS

Various Artists

8 8 5 9 Remixes

FAT CAT FATCD07 CD

Shadowy Berlin duo Various Artists are best known for their excellent work on Chain Reaction, mostly collected on the *Decay Product* CD. This compilation brings together two later 12"s — "B 8 5 9", released two years ago, and a set of remixes which came out late in 1998. A new mix by Arovane is added to those already filed by Autechre, Funkstorung, Pole and Monolake.

The CD kicks off with the three very fine original tracks. A slow, eerily off-beam loop extends to 18 minutes is followed by a 100 second miniature bathed in quintessentially Berlin reverb, delay and panning, finally, a hypnotic melody loop running alongside numerous, shifting sounds completes the original trio. These are fascinating exercises in contemporary Techno-dub strategies — languid, enigmatic and full of hiss, echo and delicious percussion treatments.

Such atmospheres, however, get scant respect from most of the remixers, whose remodellings apply their own template regardless of the feel of the originals. Funkstorung's version of "9" turns it into a jerky piece of electronica, adding an irritating melody line. All too predictably, Pole finds in the same track a pretext for another of his

lugubrious, reggae-inflected workouts Autechre's delirious beats though interesting in themselves, cut across the studiedly beatific Various Artists approach The Arovane is inoffensive, taking all the quirk right out of "B" Only the closing Monolake mix is attuned to the space held in "B S" delivering a piece of deep washes and hazy drifting Here at least is an attempt to extend Various Artists' methods

WILL MONTGOMERY

John Wall

Constructions I-IV

UTTERPSALM CD4 CD

John Wall's sampler montages are utterly distinctive First, most of his samples are taken from the field of contemporary composition Xenakis, Birtwhistle Nono, Penderecki and others Second he makes use of sounds produced by improvisors here including bassist John Edwards and percussionist Mark Sanders, whose work was specially recorded for the release Wall works by abstracting incredibly resonant fragments from his sources and working them into strange suggestive narratives Since he has long abandoned the harsh tactic of dropping in fuzzed guitars the pieces hang together beautifully — studio recompositions that are quite different from either of the traditions he feeds on

He stretches some of his sounds into drones Particularly successful are the gently oscillating tones used in track four against a stressed whistling sound Elsewhere he employs snatches of piano, clicks and percussion for timbral purposes rather than rhythm The way he suspends time in these works is reminiscent of AMM, where the music hangs and drifts equivocating over the forward flow of the sounds in time Wall achieves an oddly pulseless feeling each of the pieces evolves at a discernible but elusive pace

The "Constructions" work through unfolding sequences of carefully layered fragments Episodes sometimes grow out of each other seamlessly — the mutated Edwards/Sanders dialogue that opens "Construction III" becomes a different, strangely apposite juxtaposition of noises when sampled strings are added In places he perpetrates shocking shifts in texture, where events such as a cluster of piano notes or a single percussion strike take on huge weight Throughout the disc, Wall organises these cells of sound in extraordinarily taut arrangements

Highs and lows dominate though not in the extreme fashion of Ryoji Ikeda who is also sampled here But there s a recurring focus on combinations of high frequencies and sounds such as Edwards juddering downwardly transposed bass notes For all their severity of tone Wall's compositions eventually break away from their hesitant progress and burst into life

WILL MONTGOMERY

the compiler

Julian Cowley hauls ass through 2000 years of (Western) music making

The threshold of the third Christian millennium is as good a time as any for taking stock. With ***2000 Years Of Music*** (Harmonia Mundi HMX29D8100 09 1DxCD), the French company has shaken down its catalogue to fill up a boxed set billed as a 'voyage of discovery — a 12 hour 'musical adventure', no less Actually, although the collection offers moments of startling brilliance and a series of excellent performances, it conforms pretty squarely to standard historical accounts of European classical tradition, unfolding smoothly from antiquity to the contemporary, with nary an acknowledgement of the contributions of non-Christian cultures, even though HM is an outstanding source of global music Exploratory zeal is a less appropriate orientation than readiness to be immersed in the warm bath of orthodoxy, perhaps, where individual composers stand conveniently as representatives of their epoch's stage of musical development

It's unlikely that any listener will be overwhelmed with the shock of the new on encountering stabilisers such as the excerpts from Handel's *Water Music* and Vivaldi's *Four Seasons* on disc five, or Mendelssohn s *Wedding March* on disc seven But there are a few freaks and erratics dotted around the discs that are unexpected in themselves and suggestive of currents outside the mainstream *Le Chant Des Oyseaulx* is a fine example of the *Programme Chansons* of Clement Janequin, who studied with Josquin Desprez. Elsewhere in his writing, Janequin introduced the street cries of Paris and the turbulent noise of the battle of Marignano That's as close to plunderphonics as the early 16th century got. For the *Oyseaulx* piece he required singers to mimic birdsong, centuries before Olivier Messiaen latched onto the notion, and the lively rendition here should win the approval of listeners attuned to Meredith Monk and Joan LaBarbara Another offbeat gem, also evoking birdcalls, is the *Sonata Representiva* by 17th century Bohemian composer Heinrich Biber His baroque expressionism embraced dissonance and experimentation with variant tunings The resultant sonorities are at times reminiscent of the Hardanger fiddle heard in Scandinavian folk music

These are relative oddities More generally the usual questions arise as to what has been excluded in order to arrive at the neat contours of a coherent tradition As ever the answer is a great deal, and it would be easy enough to open up faultlines Accepting the limitations imposed by the label's purview, however, the chronological range — from Byzantine chant to Arvo Part — is impressive And stylistically, this version of Western music is sufficiently elastic to accommodate medieval troubadours (the introduction of the compact disc did much to encourage interest in Early Music, while elsewhere The Hilliard Ensemble sealed a bizarre marketing pact between the [then] newest technology and antique Christian musical forms on their bestselling CD collaborations with Jan Garbarek), Baroque opera, Karlheinz Stockhausen and Astor Piazzolla without losing the appearance of cohesion

The only documentation navigating this musical abundance is a basic map, in the form of a chart tracing a course from 'the birth of a Christian repertoire' to current 'multiple directions' Such paucity of information is, of course, an implicit invitation to refer to the releases from which the selection has been culled, but it is a regrettable economy At worst, it risks reinforcing a sense that music evolves according to a self-evident logic peculiar to itself aloof from other social practices In that light, the collection, despite the occasional blip in the curve, follows an arc through time with Beethoven at its apex His music is allotted the largest share in the account, and the finale to his *Symphony No 9* sits like a monolith at its heart The ensuing Romanticism is labelled The Golden Age, then a kind of dissipation seems to occur The near-Eastern savour of the Byzantine chant which opens the first CD, and the refined tango by Argentinian composer Piazzolla, which concludes the last, can be construed as alien termini

Such an observation is too apocalyptic and grudging, however A more tangible cause for concern is the exclusion from this history of any compositions written by women The Harmonia Mundi catalogue extends to intriguing figures such as Elizabeth-Claude Jacquet De La Guerre, whose music was favoured at the Court of Louis XIV It can doubtless be argued that she is too 'minor for inclusion, but such argument smacks of sophistry minor, so excluded excluded, so minor

If the disappointing absence of women comes up on the debit side, credit must go to the label s invaluable service to the cause of Early Music Its richness is such that despite the fact that European music has been notated in some form or other for around 1400 of the last 2000 years, the 13th century *Ars Antiqua* (including the work of Pérotin), and the innovations of *Ars Nova* and *Ars Subtilior* are kept waiting until the second disc.

The early 20th century is represented by the obvious heavyweights, such as Stravinsky Bartók, Schoenberg and Shostakovich Edging forward, Serialism And Post-serialism proves a category expansive enough to contain symphonic writing by Henry Dutilleux as well as Pierre Boulez s *Domaines* A section taken from Luciano Berio's *Laborintus 2* serves to acknowledge the incursion of electronics and jazz into the frame Pieces by Gyorgy Ligeti, John Cage and Iannis Xenakis also broaden the horizon, but the most striking departure from the established lineage is Stockhausen's *Aus Den Sieben Tagen*, intuitive music deploying technologically alert musicians such as Michel Portal, Aloys Kontarsky and Jean-Pierre Drouet 30 years after its recording it retains its invigorating strangeness

One of the pleasures of this box set is how it enables the juxtaposition of something as 'out' as the Stockhausen piece with Palestrina's beautiful *Missa Vin Galilaei*, an elegant concerto by Corelli, the extraordinary *Vida* by the troubadour Folquet de Marselha, and Janácek's evocative *In The Mists* The breadth of music opened up by this small sample of fine performances of works spanning the millennia is a real cause for celebration !

Stockhausen: *Sieben Tage* to 2000

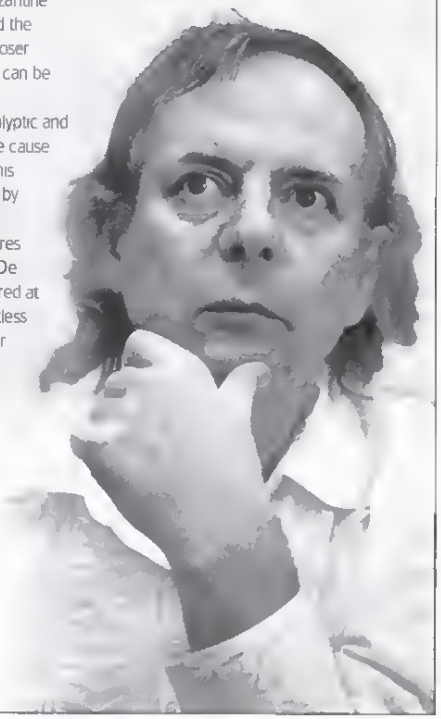

PHOTO MALCOLM CROWTHERS

in brief avant rock

Reviewed by **Edwin Pouncey**

Loren MazzaCane Connors *Airs* ROADCONE ROCO023 CD
Loren MazzaCane Connors & Jim O'Rourke *In Bern* HAT NOIR HATNOIR803 CD
The curious newcomer to Brooklyn born guitarist Loren MazzaCane Connors's work is faced with the problem of where to start on a massive discography much of it low key instrumental with relatively little variation distinguishing one record from the next *Airs* is as a good a place as any to begin It consists of a series of short precisely played solos which occasionally rattle the speakers when Connors hits the right note The pieces sound more like sketches than fully formed compositions and his highly personalised guitar style breathes rather than roars In the company of Jim O'Rourke however, the amplification heightens and the song lengths grow longer The performances are less fragile sounding and more rock orientated The obviously awestruck O'Rourke's intrusion into his hero's tightly constructed web of sound becomes quickly tiresome, however It might have been all right on the night but on record it sounds both shambolic and uneventful

Here & Now *Gospel Of Free* GAS AGASCD015 CD
Here & Now were the UK equivalent of Gong with whom they were briefly involved at the peak of their anti-career They were a self-sufficient travelling freak commune who improvised space rock at various free festivals across the country As a result they were hounded into extinction by the powers that be Consisting of live and studio material from 1976-78 this fascinating document charts hippy idealism's metamorphosis into punk rock anarchy (they once shared a stage and album with *Sniffin' Glue* editor Mark Perry's Alternative TV) and dares you to spot the join

The High Llamas *Snowbug* V2 VVR1008972 CD
This time out Sean O Hagan's perfectly groomed herd of High Llamas sound like they could be the resident act at some imaginary alpine hotel under the new management of Beach Boys boss Brian Wilson Easy on the ear *Snowbug* is an unassuming collection of vibrantly played pop confections exquisitely and intelligently composed, with a cool twist of eccentricity lightly squeezed over them to keep your index finger from straying too near the eject button

The Impacts *Sex, Wax & Surf* CAPTAIN TRIP CTCD198 CD
Born on the crest of the surfing craze that hit California in the early 60s The Impacts were an instrumental group who scored a massive hit with "Wipe Out" Guitarist Merrell Fankhauser would later jump ship to form psychedelic combo Fapardokly and eventually join forces with Jeff (Antennae Jimmy Semens) Cotton as Mu This somewhat nostalgia driven comeback album transfuses new blood into the original Impacts sound by including Fankhauser's son Tim on lead guitar and Rudy Esquire on sax to create a kind of languid Martin Denny Easy Listening rock instrumental record In reality though, the tide went out on this weathered bunch of surfnuts years ago

Barbara Manning & The Go-Luckys! *Homeless Where The Heart Is EP* NAIV NAIV1990920 CD
After being unceremoniously dumped by Matador Records (for whom she recorded her magnificent *1212* album in 1997) singer/songwriter Barbara Manning has torn up her San Francisco roots to tour the world and figure out the meaning of her life The works on this self-dedicated EP were written in Germany and recorded with new group The Go-Luckys!, a partly therapeutic musical exercise that has resulted in six of her best Manning's soul-baring songs are tempered with her quirky sense of humour, coupled to a need to bend strings and wring the right noises and emotions from her guitar neck The beautifully performed bitter-sweet final track, "Isn't Lonely Lovely" reluctantly celebrates her newfound freedom and at the same time, subliminally flicks the finger at those who so foolishly let her go

Mr Velocity Hopkins *Mr Velocity Hopkins* INSIGNIFICANT/BULB NO NUMBER CD
This US spoof noise project centres on the mysterious Mr Velocity Hopkins not a single entity but a bunch of unknowns who incontinently namecheck acts like Quintron, Jim O'Rourke US Maple and His Name Is Alive The music is equally confused, a mixture of Japanese noise, 60s free jazz squawk and flyblown punk rock Halfway through the bloated phantom of Eugene Chadbourne playing his electric rake looms into earshot — or so they wish — only to be rapidly replaced with a bout of inept yet endless finger shredding guitar thrashing Very funny

Revolutionary Corps Of Teenage Jesus *Daddy Died A Brooklyn Nightmare* CREEPING BENT BENT051 CD
The 'unlikely pairing' of Suicide vocalist Alan Vega and ex-Altered Images drummer turned machinist Stephen Lironi results in an unequal partnership where the singer's unique delivery props up Lironi's sheets of Techno drivel and one finger synth stabs Worse still, their blunted 'proto' version of Suicide's "Frankie Teardrop" muzzles the electric bite of the original This act of vandalism can only be attributed to a severe lack of imagination on the part of Lironi and a serious lack of judgement on the part of Vega

Rick Rizzo & Tara Key *Dark Edson Tiger* THRILL JOCKEY THRILL072 CD
The long distance guitar-kissing of Eleventh Dream Day's Rick Rizzo and Antietam's Tara Key has been carried out in a continuous exchange of tapes This seriously strange yet bleakly atmospheric set of modern American compositions is the result The musical genes of *Dark Edson Tiger* are, very loosely late 70s US punk rock but something even more powerful pastoral and primitive stalks its intricately fashioned instrumentals Growling low and quietly swishing its tail it will mesmerise anyone in earshot into becoming its prey

Six By Seven *Ten Places To Die/England & A Broken Radio EP* MANTRA MNT49 CD
On the evidence of this EP, taken from their forthcoming album (scheduled for February 2000) Six By Seven might be just the group to give the pitiful UK indie rock' scene the kick up the ass it so justly deserves The group's sonic antics partly make up for singer Chris Olley's mimicry of Radiohead's Thom Yorke especially when he finally shuts up and allows them to spill over into a feedback/fuzz pedal effects maelstrom

State River Widening *State River Widening* ROCKET GIRL RGIRL18 CD
Lazily branded as a cross between Tortoise and (gulp!) Simon And Garfunkel London trio State River Widening's music is more a widescreen cinematic sprawl than either of those coordinates suggest Recall how Van Dyke Parks breathed life into his version of Brer Rabbit, and the way Carl Orff's music was used in Terrence Malick's *Badlands* and you'll get some idea of how SRW project idyllic dream pictures (occasionally tinged with darkness) through the untampered sound of their instruments A thoroughly enjoyable and gloriously unpretentious set of vigorously played songs

Stylus *The Last Seaweed Collecting Hut At Freshwater West* OCHRE OCHO12L CD
Dafydd Stylus Morgan's choice of inanimate sound object is the last remaining seaweed hut at Freshwater West in Pembrokeshire His electroacoustic soundscapes to some extent follow the principles of La Monte Young's *The Second Dream Of The High-Tension Line Stepdown Transformer* and *Piano Piece For David Tudor #1* The listener is invited to envision the ruined hut at various stages of the year, as his electronic windstorm howls rhythmically around the flimsy structure Bizarre as it sounds the music is curiously moving and empathetic

Superfine *Uniaxial Mini Album* DECEPTIVE BLUFF 069 CD
An otherwise unexceptional blast of riff dominated UK indie Ambient-punk (if that's not an oxymoron) which flails around chasing its own tail for a while, slows down to a plod, and finally goes crazy "Syd Barrett" (yawn) is their improvised tribute to the overrated ex-Pink Floyd leader A freeform guitar lope — with a sensible sounding rhythm track clumsily fitted in at the last moment — temporarily creates the illusion that these boys might be onto something The notion quickly dissipates, however, in the seconds it takes for their next horrible song to lurch out of the speakers at you

Ui *The Iron Apple EP* SOUTHERN 18571 CD
Ui's new EP is a beautifully restrained memorial dedicated to one T Walter 'Pops' Styer, the 103 year old patriarch of a Pennsylvanian apple orchard in whose cider house the trio would rehearse After a short Beefheartian burst, they lock into a series of simple repetitive grooves featuring drums, bass, keyboards, guitar and radio samples which they proceed to slowly unpick and sew back together after a different pattern What emerges is both hallucinatory and — although brief — massively fulfilling

Univers Zero *The Hard Quest* CUNEIFORM RUNE120 CD
During their long existence, Univers Zero, the legendary French 70s Rock In Opposition group have made only a handful of albums, each of them carefully assembled and polished before being allowed out into the world *The Hard Quest*, their sixth album, is therefore an important event to anyone who has followed the Zeroes this far Those stumbling into their gothicky universe for the first time may find their compositions somewhat heavy and overwrought (like those of countrymen Magma) All involve a studious unravelling of classical rock themes, where not a chink of improvised light is allowed into the group's creative chamber Once your ears become accustomed to the gloom, though Univers Zero's music can be blindingly illuminating

in brief classical

Reviewed by **Louise Gray**

Teodoro Anzellotti Push Pull
HAT HUT HATART131 CD
After sterling work to reclaim the accordion by Astor Piazzolla Howard Skempton and Pauline Oliveros, here comes Anzellotti, whose *Push Pull* is a far cry from such traditional squeezebox zones as cajun and polka These five works see the thing breathing out clusters of sounds wherein tunes get dragged apart after a style aptly described in the sleevenotes as 'Balkan folklore on acid" Salvatore Sciarrino's *Vagabonde Blu* and Vinko Globokar's *Dialog Uber Luft* stand out in their contrasting approaches to savagery

Ernesto Diaz-Infante Ucross Journal PAX PR90249 CD
Californian composer Diaz-Infante worked up this series of 25 short solo piano improvisations, structured around a diurnal idea, at the rate of one for each day he was in residence at the Ucross Foundation Ranch To say that not much really happened out there under the big blue would be a cheap shot, Diaz-Infante captures a sense of space in his wide-open arrangements but despite some nods towards Morton Feldman in his study of the music's spatial capabilities, you can't shake the feeling that the collection lacks rigour As a consequence, his kind of introspective tonalities leads inexorably towards the fluffy cloud end of the New Age market — surely a fate worse than death for any composer with an ounce of intelligence

Charles Ives Plays Ives CRI 810 CD
Recorded at four sittings between 1933-43, Ives made these records of Emerson transcriptions and other studies for himself rather than the public because he wanted to hear his own music without the distraction of playing it All well and good, but the record is seriously inhibited by the recording technology of the time The sound is muffled and boomy, but there are some moments to be briefly savoured Ives fluffing a line and the mutter — his? The engineer's? — that finds its way onto the recording

Emmerich Kálmán Die Herzogin Von Chicago DECCA 466057 2XCD
One of the last albums in Decca's important Entartete Musik/Degenerate Music series, its Austro-Hungarian composer Kalman was singled out for special attention by the Nazis After Germany annexed Austria, Kalman escaped Vienna in 1938 in a Mercedes flying Hungarian flags which showed some style in the face of appalling danger The same cannot be said for *Die Herzogin* (1928) which comes very much from the post-Great War fashion of combining opera — in this case operetta — and jazz with the idea of plugging into something that looked beyond the collapse and carnage of the war The work sounds frothy today, pure Broadway but that's beside the point

Kåre Kolberg Certainty And Doubt AURORA ACD5009 CD
This wide-ranging disc from prolific Norwegian composer Kolberg shows how far he has travelled in thought between 1964's groundbreaking austere string quartet *Quartetto Per Archi* (a deceptively simple riposte to the strictures of modernism) and the full colours and tonalities of 1994's *Bozza Per Orchestra* where the orchestra is powered up like some great Wagnerian motor Kolberg's painterly approach to the music's drama is reiterated in 1983's *Ana In Ana*, which progresses in layers to its extraordinary and inevitable halt

Leo Kupper Ways Of The Voice POGUS P210182 CD
Sections of terror scattered among beautiful vocal passages (written for mezzo Anna Maria Kieffer and tenor Eduardo Janho-Abumrad) make this the experimental music equivalent of *The Blair Witch Project* Scratching, hisses and a cacophony of barely heard electroacoustic material suggest the tape recorder is on the verge of a paranoid overload Kupper's detailed sleevenotes talk about phonetic and abstract language with psychoanalysis as a bridge between conscious and unconscious structures Recommended

Emanuel Dimas De Melo Pimenta Pessoa ASA ART AND TECHNOLOGY CMC104 CD
Emanuel Dimas De Melo Pimenta Olivestone ASA ART AND TECHNOLOGY CMC105 CD
These two works from Portugal's De Melo Pimenta were originally created to accompany sculptor Irene Buareque's 1996 installation *Pessoa Astral*, and Lucrezia De Domizio Rurini and Marco Agostinelli's video biography of the life of German artist Joseph Beuys. Echoing Beuys's statement that "truth must be found in reality not systems", De Melo Pimenta's work has a quality that defies definition Both pieces are mainly electroacoustic orientated, unleashing a rushing airstream of barely grasped sound images The CD-ROM extra built around poet Fernando Pessoa gives the listener glimpses of the composer's graphic score, containing whole universes of computer generated 3D images

Per Nørgård Singe Die Garten DACAPO 8224115 CD
This collection of choral works from the Dane most famously remembered for his *Babel* oratorio, which featured a clown and rock vocalist among its performers provides a succinct statement of the composer's twin interests the relationship between early modal singing with 20th century techniques The pull and development between these two poles illuminate the results Works such as *Maya Danser* and *Three Agnus Dei Motets* exhibit both the clear harmonics and counterpoint of polyphony while the title piece a setting of Rilke's *Sonnet To Orpheus* is all note clusters and sound swarms The voices of Ars Nova and The Danish Chamber Players under Tamas Veto acquit themselves with honour

Robert Xavier Rodríguez Music Theater Works CRI 824 CD
Music theatre has been one of the most fertile grounds for new music in recent years and Rodriguez's contribution formal in its arrangements and approaches, should be counted as a welcome addition Containing the concert suite from his 1998 opera *Frida The Story Of Frida Kahlo* and a one act chamber opera *Tango* this succinct compilation showcases Rodriguez's intention to carve out a Latin American sensibility within that most European of forms the opera He achieves his aim in *Tango*, specifically, by generating a tension between the dance rhythms apparently indigenous to Argentina and more European forms The much lauded *Frida* is equally dramatic in its choice of themes and musical materials, which include a competently managed passage by a tuneless village band

Arnold Schoenberg Works For Piano HAT HUT HATART125 CD
Soloist Pi-Hsien Chen's excellent album traces the tentative beginnings of Schoenberg's harmonic revolution illuminating its twists and turns with startling clarity In the process it goes some way to redressing the balance on the composer's unfairly underrated piano works Chen's recording takes in compositions written between 1894-1931 rightly identifying them as hinge moments in Schoenberg's compositional career His *Drei Klavierstucke* (1894) is firmly rooted within a tonal tradition that takes in Brahms and Beethoven but by 1925 Schoenberg is articulating for the first time the twelve tone row that upturned Western harmonic conventions

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in brief critical beats

Reviewed by Peter Shapiro

Beastie Boys Alive GRAND ROYAL 13854 CD
Using the mic alternately like *"Picasso used clay"* and *"Shazam used tights"* Shadrach Meshach and Abednego once again live up to KRS-One's request to *"Bring it back, that old New York rap"* Riding a backwards string loop and subdued cuts, 'Alive" might not be the most fun churned up by these former delinquents but unlike some of their other maturity moves this throwaway 'new cut' on their current double CD retrospective doesn't fail to bring a smile to your face

Da Ruckus/Paradime/D12 High DTW DTW01 12
Continuing Detroit Motor City's laudable tradition of gloriously offensive music (The Stooges, Ted Nugent DJ Assault, Eminem) these guys *"Stab you in the back with a rusty knife"*, *"Hock a loogie in your face"* and *"get in to you like Drew Barrymore with clymidia"* More than the C Delores Tucker-baiting lyrics though it's the music that makes this 12" Like Jeff Mills doing HipHop the backing track is nothing but two kickdrum beats two snare beats, three bass throbs and a synth lick per bar with some guy yammering *"Yo yo yo yo yo"* manically in the background

Julia Decay Oodaman EP PRO JEX PROX016 12
Ms Decay is actually Cristian Vogel s straightahead Techno guise Well as straightahead as this avant weirdo is likely to get The standout "Crop Boom Bang" is a skipping slipping sliding jack track that rides on top of what sounds like the speeded-up wah-wah slap bass of Stevie Wonder's "Superstition" Elsewhere Vogel tarts up Jeff Mills-styled minimal grooves with divebombing basslines, ethnic percussion and all sorts of gratuitous sound effects

Burnt Friedmann & The Nu Dub Players Do Not Legalize It! SCAPE SCAPE003 12
After his success with Flanger the one and only Burnt Friedmann departs for uncharted waters with this new project on Stefan 'Pole Betke's excellent Scape label The EP opens with what sounds like a soundclash between The Disco 3 s "Human Beatbox" and a malfunctioning Zion Steppers riddim Called "Hard Drive Dub , it's destined to be a huge club hit "Ridiculation Riddim" follows similar lines, but without the expectorating hook — although there are some fart noises towards the end Though "The Big Black Dther" doesn't live up to its Lacanian pisstake title it is fine post-dub nonetheless while "Hut Selector Version" adds some synth washes to a loop of a dripping faucet

Gemini Swimmin' Wit' Sharks EP CLASSIC CMC77 12
Although he's only got a few records to his name Chi-town s Gemini is one of the most creative innovative and just plain bizarre House producers around *Swimmin' Wit' Sharks* doesn't quite reach the heights of his Relief releases, but there s enough weird shit here to make it worthwhile The title track is a stream of consciousness rant about respect that nods its head to his old boss Cajmere/Green Velvet (*"Camera ready prepare to get wrecked"*) set over the kind of percolating yet dubby, groove that made House so great once upon a time "We Are The Future", meanwhile features the most direct Philthy Animal' Taylor-like drums ever heard on a House track while "A Taste" gets a (DJ) Rush of blood to its head and comes over all dark and pounding

The Icepick Dungeon Funk RUF BEATS RUF027 12
Like most British MCs The Icepick doesn't flow so much as tumble — his voice is thick and gruff and when he needs to get dextrous, he merely rolls his tongue like a Jamaican dancehall DJ The style works on Dungeon Funk" however as DJ Supreme gives him a beat that sounds like a Freudian circus and Icepick attacks it like an evil clown On the flip "Five Papers" is a stabbing headnodder that stalls because Icepick can t roll with the beat, while the two year old "Phenomenal Criminal" is more imitative of his New York compadres and thus works better

Knarz Knarzfunk FORCE INC FIM176 12"
The B-side of this 12" by Thomas Heckmann is the huge funky bass heavy Techno of the kind you just don't hear anymore party whistles, cowbells, handclaps and the sort of synth bass that only strip clubs have the gall to play these days The other side is the same track, only ruined by arch Germanic vocals, which grounds it in Rammstein territory

Ko-Wreck Technique Ko Wrecktion EP WARP WAP128 CD/12
Things are hotting up in the electronica bedroom Marginally better known for the head melting moments on the Chocolate Industries label Cuban heel Push Button Dbjects here teams up with DMC champ DJ Craze for a one-off turntablist head to head Craze's gently rolling thumps are fluffed up by alleged pornstar PBO on "I Can t Understand You (What)" show each other what they got on "Metro Dade" while Plaid make it a foursome on a mix of same If I hadn't left my wallet in El Segundo I'd have picked up the CD which contains a bonus four-track mix by a lone Craze *(Rob Young)*

Jonny L Selector/Change PIRANHA PIH03 12
Jonny L is just about the only big name drum 'n' bass producer worth listening to these days because he hasn't forgotten what made it exciting in the first place "Selector" might not have the funkiest rhythm in the world but the way the winded drum sounds and cowbell momentum works against the kamikaze bassline gives the track a vitality and energy that's wholly missing from its contemporaries The flip, "Change', meanwhile, does the unthinkable and brings back good old-fashioned untweaked sub-bass — welcome back, old friend we've missed you

Landslide Buddah/Drum & Bossa HOSPITAL NH516 12
"Drum & Bossa" is an eminently likeable drum 'n' bass track, all the more surprising considering its source material The rhythm moves with a samba swing and all the extraneous sounds seem to be sourced from old Sergio Mendes records, but the end product manages to transcend its Gilles Peterson/Russ Dewbury origins "Buddah' is a bit more purist in conception and effect, but it has been put together with a lightness of touch that prevents the industrial strength bassline from weighing too heavily on it Besides, its commitment to whomp prevents the track from floating away on its gossamer jazziness

Leftfield & Roots Manuva Dusted HARD HANDS HAND58 10
Leavening his usual production with Dld School touches and dancefloor directness, Leftfield creates the best Roots Manuva track yet. With its robotics and strange textures "Dusted" is suitably futuristic, but the scientifical vibe is closer to Carl Sagan than Anton Von Leeuwenhoek. Roc Raida and The X-ecutioners make things more deliberately funky, replying with ferocious scratching when Roots Manuva yells *"Guitar!"*

Metro Area Metro Area EP ENVIRON ENV008 12
Metro Area is two guys — Morgan Geist and Darshan Jesrani from the desolate New Jersey suburbs reliving an adolescence spent at the roller rink with Goody combs sticking out of their back pockets Fusing Prelude with Transmat the *Metro Area* EP oozes the neon warmth so beloved of people like 4 Hero While it may be pretty retrograde stuff, with "Piña" reeking of too much time spent reading *Keyboard* magazine, this is undoubtedly the disco 12" of the year "Atmosphrique" is a night drive through Babylon, Long Island circa 1983 Vince Clarke synth riffs some electro effects and the most deadpan handclaps ever Ironically, it achieves disco nirvana through the very thing that disco derided most authenticity

Nasty Habits Liquid Fingers/ Liquid Breaks 31 RECORDS 31R10 12"
The drum 'n' bass tastemakers have declared a shift back towards ancient House music in a vain attempt to get anyone to care anymore Doc Scott's latest foray under his Nasty Habits monicker follows this dictum and the results are as predictable and dire as you'd think "Liquid Fingers" is effectively a drum 'n' bass remix of Mr Fingers s "The House That Jack Built" Four years ago this sort of thing might have been interesting with scattershot beats working against the grain of the deep synth washes Nowadays, however the diffident shuffle serving as a beat and the heavy handed basslines only serve to make this as stiff and lifeless as Jungle s corpse

Process/DAT Politics Split FAT CAT 12FAT034 12"
The 'ninth virus of Fat Cat's Split Series is the most infectious yet Df course, it's all relative but students of Mike Ink Pole Skam and Basic Channel will find plenty of interest in the petri dish Process is the nom de disque of Cologne based ex-pat Steve Barnes, who has previously released a couple of interesting records as Blueshift His new alias pretty much gives the game away, but just as much attention is paid to the end product, and the flickering sensuousness and enveloping bass pulses suggest that Process is as interested in pleasure as he is in technique DAT Politics is a five-piece 'group' from Lille, France made up of members from Sub Rosa's Tone Rec. Where Process is a soothing nap on a low intensity sunbed DAT Politics is a nasty rash — but there's a strange pleasure when you scratch the right places It's all twitchy noise and electroacoustic posturing, but the glitchHop of "Et Hop' connects their postgrad deconstruction to the old school, showing that they can climb down from their ivory tower and join the real world every once in a while

Frederik Schikowski Einblick Ins Familienalbum IRRITANT IRRITANT1D CD
24 year old Berliner Frederik Schikowski has managed the near impossible he's made a fairly compelling album by following the textbook of the post-Aphex Twin school of pre-kindergarten tantrums Sounding alternately like a bully kicking over a sandcastle and girls singing out of tune while playing hopscotch, this record succeeds where so many before it have failed because rather than being 'zany or just emotionally retarded, it treats the playground as both a carnival of noise and as a sinister place where your insecurities are mercilessly exploited |

in brief dub

Reviewed by **Steve Barker**

Inner Circle & The Fatman Riddim Section Heavyweight Dub/Killer Dub BLOOD AND FIRE BAFCD029 CD

Inner Circle were effectively the backing band for the immensely popular Jacob 'Killer' Miller. They were signed to Island in the reggae boom of the late 70s. Their material swung between roots and more commercial affairs, though these two rare dub sets, originally released in 1978, caught them at their heaviest before they moved onto the blandness of the international stage. Mixed respectively by the then new star Maximillian at Channel One, and Jammy at Tubby's, both stand as good, strictly drum and bass affairs. The mix on Maxie's cuts turn out more brutal and driven than the Jammy sides, which are almost relaxed and jazzy in comparison, perhaps due to the immaculate guitar of Earl 'Chinna' Smith. Disappointingly Jacob Miller's voice is absent throughout, with the exception of the version to "Land Called Home" called "Addis Ababa Rock", closing the second set on a rock out.

Lee Perry & Friends Chapter 2 Of 'Words' TROJAN CDTRL425 CD

From the opening ring of a telephone bell followed by Scratch announcing *"It's the hotline"*, we know we are in for a ride. From the dub of "Words" and into the motorcycle introduction to The Stingers' "Forward Up" there's no let up, with great tunes followed by DJ and dub versions through to Prince Django's closing take on the title track. Amazingly, the bottom of the Scratch barrel has not yet been reached — if it ever will be. The invention on this set is astonishing, nowhere more so than on the version of the groundbreaking "Station Underground News", where the producer spills a welter of echoed lyrics over the rhythm in what he describes as a rap, before cutting in a sample of a soul track — and all this in 1973! Most of these tracks were originally released on the plethora of Trojan's UK subsidiaries through the first half of the 70s. If you find one on clean 7" vinyl — insure it!

Phase Selector Sound Disassemble Dub ROIR RUSCD8254 CD

Nashville punks discover dub! Despite some grandiose 'I have seen the future...' claims from the record company, this debut is steady and workmanlike, with not much to distinguish it from a host of other nu-roots releases. However, the open attitude that Joshua Elrod and Craig Allen bring to the process of building the tunes — as revealed in the sleevenotes — is encouraging. Working in the home of Country, they are ideally placed to explore some of its hidden connections with reggae, in a style similar to Jeb Loy Nicholls on his outings with The Fellow Travellers. Maybe they're coming at the same ideas from a different direction but they're definitely working up songs before stripping to the dub.

Robotiks Man And Machine ARIWA ARICD019 CD

Robotiks My Computer's Acting Strange ARIWA ARICD027 CD

Following up last month's tribute retrospective on Universal Egg, the good news is that Neal Fraser aka Mad Professor is embarking on a reissue programme of a massive catalogue. These two releases now sound full, ripe, inventive, cultural, witty and even disciplined. Both are dubwise, with their foundations in the vocal productions at Ariwa. For the first time on CD, *Man And Machine* is from 1985's *Dub Me Crazy* sessions. Though it dates from a time when dub was a forgotten language, it displays the Prof's usual signature studio trickery. In the great reggae tradition, he was unafraid to alienate the reggae establishment. 1986's *My Computer's Acting Strange* contains the classic blow straight to the head of the music press, "Echoes Of Deaf Journalists" (In truth, it was aiming at a specific journalist.) Meanwhile, "Funk-A-Dub" could have come straight out of Sugarhill. The CD version also contains three bonus tracks.

Bim Sherman Lover Forever The Classic Jamaican Recordings CENTURY EFACD399012 CD

Anyone convinced that Bim Sherman's *Miracle* album from a few years back stands as a modern masterpiece will need little persuasion to invest in this retrieval job, where the source of that set's best songs can be located. Exceptionally for a Jamaican artist, Sherman has retained control of his own product, having resisted recording for the usual series of entrepreneur/producers. Such is the quality of this overdue collection of vocal sides from his own Scorpio and Red Sea imprints, selected by his longtime admirer and collaborator Adrian Sherwood, it prompts a reappraisal that promotes Sherman to the Jamaican singers' super league. All tunes are engineered by either Tubby or Jammy, and any anguish at the absence of the dub sides is quickly relieved by the news that a dedicated set is scheduled, in addition to a second volume of songs and a compilation of On-U Sound rarities and unreleased sides.

Jah Thomas Meets The Roots Radics Dubbing TROJAN CDTRL431 CD

As the 70s ran into the 80s, The Roots Radics emerged as reggae's leading rhythm machine. Their rise coincided with that of the newly created dancehall style that displaced the so-called golden age of reggae, when successful DJ Nkrumah Jah Thomas started producing for his own Midnight Rock and Nura labels. His sessions took place at Channel One, where desk duties were performed by engineers like Peter Chemist, Sylvan Morris, Soljie, Barnabas, Bunny Tom Tom and Scientist. With early dancehall making a comeback in the reggae revival market, this set should do well featuring a series of the DJ's own rhythms as well as some classics. There's also more variation in this selection than you would have got first time round.

King Tubby At The Controls TROJAN CDTRL429 CD

A much more rounded and complete collection than the *Striker Lee* set reviewed in *The Wire* 189, this release is sub-titled *10th Anniversary Special: 22 Deadly Dub Classics*. It brings together tunes remixed by the Dubmaster from producers such as Niney The Observer, Bunny Lee and Carlton Patterson. Not that any one single CD can legitimately lay claim to being the 'definitive' or 'best of' King Tubby, but this is a worthy stab. Though it is difficult to single out individual tracks, "A Rougher Version", the dub to Jackie Edwards's reworking of Burning Spear's "Invasion", sets a pace that remains relentless, any dub to John Holt's "Ali Baba" always sounds awesome, but this one is especially mind-blowing, complete with machine guns in the rhythm section! Mixes on such classic rhythms as "Drum Song", "Skylarking", "Shank-I-Sheck" and "Wash Wash" all pay testament to the peerless skills of Tubby, some of which are new to CD, making it an essential purchase.

Twilight Circus Dub Sound System Dub Plates Volume 2 M NO NUMBER LP

Cut for maximum drum 'n' bass vibrations at the legendary Dubplates and Mastering studios in Berlin and pressed on audiophile 180 gram vinyl, the second release in Ryan Moore's sound system series might have been a triumph of shape over substance, had it not been a full three stripe set. The use of 'real' instruments, pulling back on overused Techno effects, is what makes this selection stand out. From the storming first track, constructed like a classic Channel One cut, through to the thunderous closer, the album is a real ear-opener for those who have foolishly avoided Moore's previous output in his dubwise incarnation. This Canadian may have an indie hard beat pedigree with the likes of Skinny Puppy and Legendary Pink Dots, but he has found his most creative niche as a purveyor of heavy, heavy rhythms in a traditional style, while hitting on the secret of that most elusive element for the new dub genre — freshness.

Various Artists An Even Harder Shade Of Black PRESSURE SOUNDS PSCD001 CD

The reissue of its debut release marks a coming of age for one of the UK's premier roots reggae retrieval labels, which now has an impressive back catalogue of its own. The set, a SD/SD split between vocal/DJ and dub tracks, is actually a re-release of *Harder Shade Of Black* from Leonard Chin's Santic label, but with six extra cuts of a similar vintage. Consequently it's an unmissable collection for dub fans, with five classic early tracks from the late Augustus Pablo, and a stone classic from the mighty King Tubby in the company of The Santic All Stars called "One Heavy Duba".

Various Artists French Dub Connection ECHO BEACH EB022 CD

Various Artists Reggae Chich 8 The Versions BAKCHICH 031092 CD

These compilations of diverse French outfits signal the emergence of a dub scene that is apparently stronger on the Continent than the UK. Certainly there is a loosening of the demands which normally dictate the essential elements and parameters generally defining traditional dub, and more an emphasis on sound system culture — including a coexistence with drum 'n' bass, breakbeat HipHop and all shades of Techno. The looming presence of Laurent Garnier is central to both *French Dub Connection* and the growth in confidence of French dance musicians and performers. Dub Action parties now run monthly in Montmartre, and last September the first French dub label, Hammerbass, was formed with 12"s from The Rootsman, Primitive and Rasboras Dub Tribe. The latter two acts both feature on this set, along with Kojak, who also has a major deal. Whether it's dub is not really the question — which should be what's happening? If you're in Paris and can't find the party, check out Laurent Diouf's Wreck This Mess show on Radio Libertaire — it's as close as you'll get.

Reggae Chich is a French compilation of ragga dubs, which is unusual in itself, as version albums featuring contemporary reggae rhythms are a rarity. This is unfortunate, as many of today's young gun producers and engineers are as talented as their illustrious forbears. Standout tracks here are "Murder Metric", Mafia & Fluxy's mutant take on "90D Number", and Jeremy Harding's wonderfully threatening "Playground", which served as the rhythm to Beenie Man's monster "Who Am I". In fact, if you find the abrasive vocals of some current DJs hard to take, this collection of abstract propulsions provides an alternative route into this particular jungle. □

in brief electronica

Reviewed by **Dave Howell**

Benge The Very Best Of Benge
SUB ROSA SR167 CD
Though the packaging neglects to date them, I'd say this compilation of tracks lifted from Benge's five self-released albums harks back to the *Artificial Intelligence* era of UK electronica. Slow, warm, analogue whorls and rolling, glassy blurs orbit lusciously around flickering pinpoint percussion, creating a complex melodic interplay and textural density through a pile up of offset notes and rhythms. In parts patchy and a little over-familiar, its sparkling, prismatic forest of sounds opens up plenty of space for the head to explore.

Michael Fakesch Manon MUSIK AUS STROM MAS14 04 CD
Half of Munich duo Funkstorung, Michael Fakesch's debut solo album matches five tracks from earlier Demon EPs with five new offerings. On *Manon* he mostly pares down Funkstorung's saccharine analogue melodies to foreground the science of the clinically laboured-over rhythms. Perhaps the problem with so much music of this type lies in the producer's hyper-concentration on the minutiae of the text to the extent that he or she loses sight of its overall impact, opening up a gap between the producer's own involvement/enjoyment and that of the listener. Accordingly, *Manon* ends up fitting between genuine intrigue and treadwater tediousness, where the funk eventually disappears inside itself.

Hecate Negative World Status
ZHARK 12004 12"
Rachel Kotzaak aka Hecate returns to deliver five tracks of flailing breaks and sprawling post-industrial ambience, with contributions from Nomex and Praxis founder Christoph Fringelli. "Rural Cryptic" merges concrète recordings and electronics to forge a creeping ambience of rising tension. "They Were Her Friends" chops nagging kicks and skittering breaks in and out and over horror chords and twisting gothic veils, as the track drives into tightly coiled Techstep. The staggering "Haxeplatz" leads you uncertainly through dark, detemtonalised wastelands, where twists of texture, howls and random blasts thud, sprawl and decay, while echo towers erected from slowly gathering militant beats glower in the slow-burning chaos.

Gustavo Lamas Celeste TRAUM TRAUM2 CD
There's something affectingly fragile about the presentation of Traum releases, all pastel shades, spindly lowercase lettering and acres of unused space. But you can't say the same about the content of the first artists CD — Gustavo Lamas from Buenos Aires. A student of 'ArgentEno' Daniel Melero, butt of male rockist rock press derision in that country for years, Lamas opens with grainy, popping bubblewrap drone *a la* Vladislav Delay on "Apuesta", before moving through several layers of aural transmutations — noises like metal turning to foam, wood petrifying — which wouldn't sound out of place on Stefan Betke's Scape label. Also, the musicians within Lamas's small community use electronica in a process of self-definition, not style manipulation, so it comes with an extra urgency. *(Rob Young)*

Anthony Manning Concision Edits DISTRICT SIX 004 12"
This cool, cleverly constructed 12" re-presents Anthony Manning's awesome *Concision* (first released on Irdial in 1997) with three new remixes added as an appendix. Metamatics' "Summertime Ends" mix is pure nightvision electro — a dark synth drive through a cold, closed off motoropolis. Popping, skipping beats falter; irradiated neon washes shimmer and hang, as the track builds into a body-jerking rhythmachine. New Skam artist Geiom raises the pressure with a mix of spinning beats and sample loops. Copenhagen's GoodiePal cools things down with three short, bolted-together tracks, processing a section of synth through a wash of fuzzy FX, interwoven with a simple section of piano.
The remixes are fine, but the original album's stunning, spiralling pull towers above them. Its brooding slice of noir-ish electronics might sound retro, but the way it drags the head and the heart deep into its pulsating gothic core feels as vital today as it did when it was originally released.

Panacea Phoenix Metabolism
POSMON CHROME PC45 CD
Panacea brings in American MC Rant, Ambush founder DJ Scud, MC Ronin, Problem Child and numerous others to help him improve on his disappointing *Twisted Designz* album. *Phoenix Metabolism* is nothing if not endlessly energetic. Its 22 tracks foresake his earlier spartan Techstep repetition for a more chaotic hybrid of dirt-drenched hardcore and HipHop, punctuated with numerous brief interludes and dialogue snatches. "Battlestations" and "Sunburst" are monstrous drum 'n' bass, driven by blistering, bass-heavy analogue noise. "Wahrheit Oder Fiktion" is dense, slow-burning HipHop. And Rant fires off manic monologue-streams of futureshock imagery on his tracks. The usual dread-heavy elements are in place: battle zone sounds, sirens, PCP cloudbursts, dark synthblasts, heavy beats and malevolent bass. Again, Panacea proves himself to be a master of teased-out and sliced-up intro ambience, blissfully confusing the listener with tracks that take shape from a fast moving flood of sample snatches that cuts through a chaos of clashing elements all of them pulling in different directions.

Pure King Kong Part 2 PRAXIS 26 12"
The Praxis label expands its soundworld once again to accommodate Viennese artist Pure's two track exploration of visceral free noise. "King Kong" streams out torrents of abrasive midrange violence, scoured across bassy beat-blasts. Halfway through, the continuous noise drops out, leaving Pure to throw a prolonged series of tone-bursts and squeals across the waste area. The track kicks in again fiercely with barbs of nerve-shredding noise and a low, jerking rhythm, before it ends in a violent shower and the sound of windows shutting down. "Katharsis", meanwhile, is powered on a juddering, pneumatic pulse, topped with hissing and sizzling layers of sound. Awesome, essential stuff for noiseheads.

Nosei Sakata (*0) & Richard Chartier O/R 12K 1006 CD
The minimally packaged *O/R* offers up no information other than its very similar track titles — derived from various combinations of the album's title letters which are then further differentiated by the tiniest shifts in punctuation — and timings. However, its contents reward disciplined deep listening, which reveals a stereo-forest of amplified insectile noises, occasional blips and bleeps, flickering, electronic crackles, click rhythms and pulses, controlled blasts of fuzz, glassy explosions and warbling tones. The dense crackle-rhythm of "r/O" is sliced through with serial sections of silence. "r/O" works a similar stop-start ploy. Moving slowly, every sound is deliberately placed with the intense precision of a fetishist.

Alejandra Salinas Home Tapes
LUCKY KITCHEN NO NUMBER 10"
Home Tapes is Lucky Kitchen's Alejandra Salinas's reworking of the home recordings she made in her native Spain when she was nine years old. Recalling the sound design of Jean-Luc Godard's films, it consists of odd background sounds and indigenous musics rising and receding between tape hiss and clips of family dialogue and children singing. Reprocessed through the PC, its ambiences and speeches are invested with a new sense of intrigue, tuning the ear to the spaces and textures of the Spanish language. The tuneless nature of Lucky Kitchen's aural documents may restrict their audience, but the way each explores a specific time, space and culture makes them especially relevant in an era of mass human migration (be it real or virtual) and the current media vogue for intrusive home videos and docusoaps.

Shirt Trax Good News About Space OR UP09 CD
Unlike the cold, hard neon focus of peers like Hecker, Shirt Trax (snd's Mark Fell and Brighton based Jeremy Potter) are alive to a more diverse, scattershot approach to electronic minimalism. Tiny digital squiggles and pulses, squeals, clicks, pops, clanks, motor rhythms and lock grooves whirr and writhe across the sound spectrum. Moments of extreme restraint are followed by bursts of frantic exuberance. Taken as a whole, this is a seriously contrary and unstable album, which leaves it to the listener to formulate some sense from its micro-mega mess of squirming and sprawling shapes.

16-17 (Sound System Mixes) Mechanophobia PRAXIS 31 12"
Industrial noise veterans 16-17 move their field of operations between the stage and the sound system, with this release leaning more towards the latter. Two long tracks hack out journeys through a murky, constantly shifting beatscape, forming another slippery, excited zone of hardcore activity. Like ACR's "Winter Hill" dragged into the next millennium, *Mechanophobia* locks into a primal flow, in which heavy swirls of sound stutter and overlap a clattering rhythm to create one long, sprawling mess of bass-bleed pulses, curling and peeling stabs of trumpet, and EQ-twists and ferocious noise ambushing the hyperactive beat. Yet even as sounds scream and explode all around you, like an out of control vehicle, the music hurtles onwards.

Tone Rec Coucy-Pack SUB ROSA SR159 CD/LP
On *Coucy-Pack*, French quartet Tone Rec rework their own crisply recorded drum breaks into simple motorik rhythms. With its glitching, popping CD stutters, little hooks and snags of digital sound, the album shifts seamlessly between modes of abstract ambience and a taut, propulsive flow. While their drawn out, simplistic rhythms are occasionally dull or directionless (put that down to a lapse in quality control), *Coucy-Pack* is for the most part a bold and original album.

Vendor Refill Stable LP NATURE NAT2114 CD/LP
Driven by some neat programming, *Stable LP* focuses on a clever accretion of brittle, bustling rhythms. Simple, sugary melodies repeat across the rhythm field, but their creator fails to introduce any real sense of shock or surprise, taking things only so far before running out of ideas. In place of challenging, changing narratives, these tracks circle themselves endlessly. Of course, there are exceptions. "9th Crush" introduces a more urgent funk punch to proceedings, "Bit_Addict" has a cool, jerking beat and some nostalgic melodic hooks. But far too often tracks are left to tread water endlessly, simultaneously draining and saturating the listener. □

in brief global

Reviewed by Mark Sinker

Eraldo Bernocchi/Bill Laswell/Tibetan Monks Somma 1/Hooked Light Rays FELMAY FY80132 CD

John Lennon famously requested his voice on "Tomorrow Never Knows" be recorded to sound like a thousand monks atop a mountain. This, with bassman Laswell weaving occasional phat heartground for the chanting monks of the Sed Gyued monastery, sounds like a million, deep inside a mountain. The low end is titanic, echo switched to infinity, converting the sound space into a vast, Lovecraftian tunnel, along which creeps the unspeakable living dust of millennia — to dissolve your face. No use pretending it does religious reverence any favours, but A+ for shuddering sound response and Gothick resonance. Just because fear's techniques are known doesn't mean your physiology can't still be twisted towards it.

Gnawa Diffusion Bab El-Oued Kingston MUSISOFT SEV104/COS7370 CD

In Algiers's toughest quarter, Bab el-Oued youth is largely torn between opposed false promises: militant Islam and displaced teenstyle thuglife. So parallels with Kingston that flourishing colonial ruin, and the cousinship of Gnawa — their name taken from a sect descended from Arab slaves abducted south of the Sahara — to Rasta, justify the echoed utopian bravado of ragga toasting within this banlieu Moorish opp (not to mention the Jerry Dammers-ish spook organ, the very fine title track being the Mahgreb's answer to "Ghost Town"). Actually, Diffusion is too accurate a general description of the group's approach, where The Specials were always knottily amateur (their strength and their downfall), these brilliantly flexible mimic-musicians tend to smooth away genuine cultural intractability.

Iluyenkukori Tambours Metis/Cuban Drums PLAYASOUND PS65218 CD

An over-formalistic document of ritual drumming patterns in the cult of various Yoruba Gods as they survive in Cuba, with four tracks opening out into full if lifeless Afro-Cuban arrangement. But Shango Legba *et al* are thrillingly present all across Western discourse, under many names new and old, familiar even to those whose ancestors never suffered the Middle Passage — while the deities invoked here are from a duster European pantheon, named 'Museum Ethnomusicology' and the like. As gbos they should perhaps not be held in contempt, but it seems a pity to be so feebly in their thrall.

Amir Koushkani Quest SONGLINES SGL1402.2 CD

Sleepy instruments — tar, tombak and daf (lute and drums) — that stay sleepy even when the Sufi pulse moves up towards seductively pretty, somnolent frenzy. The sleevenote essays wing off into whiteboy projection faster than you can babble "Meetings with remarkable men", but if Western mysticism was invented by the Tsarist Secret Service, Sufi's ecstasies ground most Indian film music, that most materialist of genres. Tehran-born Koushkani has lived seven years in Canada, his exile ostensibly being the subject of this CD, so the sleevenote guff about "transcendence", "timelessness", and "the inexpressible" merely evades a much more intriguing — if so far wordless — content.

Cheikh Lô Bambay Guee) WORLD CIRCUIT WCD0057 CD

Rising star Lo seems unbothered by the old guild rules that formerly tied a Senegal griot down singing Latin-style when he wants as if Dakar were a São Paulo suburb. Co-producer is Youssou N'Dour, the once-radical young lion now chastened, yet surely also respected for clambering from the maw of 80s consumerism relatively unmauled (not to say, vastly technologically adept), even after his World Music constituency rejected his reverse fascination with the global machine pop they affected such distance from. With James Brown sideman Pee-Wee Ellis on board, Lô and N'Dour craft a successor beat to Youssou's own that's deceptively relaxed and open, coolly confident and pregnant with some of the potential Youssou himself never really realised.

Maniacs Vs Sharkiat Don't Climb The Pyramids BARBARITY 020 CD

The single, least integrated element in the great soup-swirl of panglobal pop has to be the 'white rock voice' — I don't mean the fake blues/soul schtick of an Ian Gillan or a Phil Collins. I mean the oddball deadpan buzz of Stephen Mallinder or a Genesis P-Orridge or even the bleached anti-soul Goth yowl of a Robert Smith. But Alain Croubalian's attempt to meld Industrial Swiss rock with Egyptian electro-melisma goes wonky every time he opens his mouth, since from Zurich to the pharaohs is less of a leap than the gulf between breathy post-punk affectlessness and oldtime surfpunk dementia. Well meant but ghastly.

New Jakarta Ensemble Commonality SIAM SM050005 CD

"We no longer have roots, we have aerials," says Australian McKenzie Wark in *Virtual Geographies*, implying not so much the much-hyped techno-media oneness allegedly bringing us all together, as those social divisions today funded and amplified by wealthy relatives fled elsewhere, booing neighbourly pragmatism as they huzza the home team on from the guilty safety of their faraway TV couches. To cross-smash unresolved 12 tone complexity into traditional West Sumatran chant and drone, this is Indonesian composer Tony Prabowo's inspired stab not at mythical pre-modern universality, but rather at certain overlooked dimensions of authentic roots folk, glassy-brittle, terrorstruck, trapped in bogus telegenic pasts. Not all the tracks are as effective as the two part title track, but there's a likeably unbiddable sensibility at work here, rejecting 'Asian values' cliches as fast as mere modernist Eurocentrism.

Orchestre National De Barbès Orchestre National De Barbes POULINA 724384755324 CD

'Barbes' stands for Barbes-Rochechouart, presumably (the metro station where two Parisian arteries, boulevards Barbes and Rochechouart, meet — and where a sex district and the oldest North African ghetto encounter the ghosts of the Commune) with 'Orchestre National' as a neo-Communard declaration of internal independence. Post-imperial immigrant music has shattered French pop from within, where rock left it a bit baffled, rai and rap have injected a guttural and unapologetic fuzzed-up energy, half spillover alien rage, half happy-feet dizziness — "everyday greyness invaded by a burning desire, reality enchanted," says the sleeve — that comes closer than you'd think to the all night yammer of hardcore Techno.

Qaballa Steppers Passage At Noon BARAKA FOUNDATION BKA0013 CD

Dub's echo spaces (Lee Perry's TV leakage and creaking doors) leave room for anything; ditto HipHop, with its sampler layered remake-fake of Old School disc-scratch collage. Together they may indeed form the basis for music as a universal language, but there's still that little nut to crack, of having something to say in it. Here, illbient dubcore blah blah electro-Burroughsian blah blah Judaica blah blah feels as easy to generate as that genre description, by a simple scramble permutation of flavour elements. Across yet another replay of *Blade Runner* atmospherics, the mild naughtiness of Necromical Hebreists clowning in Nation of Islam street masks. Ho hum.

The Music Of Shabbat At BJ With Every Breath KNITTING FACTORY RECORDS KFR258 CD

Whatever the intent, the uncritical recording — or compositional co-opting — of the music of ordinary religious observance by musicians associated with secular art music turns into kitsch (compared to this example of the trend, at least Laswell's Tibetan monkrock has plenty of vulgar horrorcore vitality). If Judaic rituals of remembrance are worthy objects of commbolification, cynical popcult irreverence is needed to chivvy out the full survivalist verve — just think what gospel and blues have had to put up with.

Various Artists The Indestructible Beat Of Soweto Volume 6: South African Rhythm Riot STERNS/EARTHWORKS STEW38 CD

You may reach for this compilation with some trepidation, which community has so swiftly declined from bright liberation (Mandela free) to dreary gridlocked compromise (his people not yet free, and no top-down tinkering is likely to effect it soon)? But actually, where I found the earlier *Indestructibles* collected a music that was too guardedly and codedly backward-looking, self-purged of politically unacceptable desires, the dreams and powers abroad in the tracks here, such as Brenda Fassie's current chartpop, are somehow far more heartening in their flimsypop flight from all that rough, gruff, raw nostalgia. In "Sixolee Baba", Chicco (aka electropop producer Sello Twala) dusts off an ancient Pink Floyd trick, the infinitely distant soulwoman, wailing wordlessly, more exactly still. Fassie's backing band — Soweto's answer to Depeche Mode — digitalate a sassy, aspirational, synthidink hunger, as if to say, "We just can't get enough."

Tama Nostalgia REAL WORLD 724384773823 CD

Pallid as ever, like United Colors of Benetton without the uncontrolled satirical edge. Real World in its 80th release sticks with a cultural mix: Malian Tom Diakite, Londoner Sam Mills, Djanuno Dabo of Guinea Bissau — that rather easily convinces itself that decent people of goodwill may work together for the party of moderate progress under the law. Too polite even to stupefy.

Xu Feng Xia Difference And Similarity FMP 96 CD

That which loudly and constantly proclaims its distance from the conventional is likely disguising deeper similarities and collusions; real change arises out of much tinier shifts converging in their million millions. Out of the Shanghai Conservatory via market Maoism and Peter Kowald, the fabulously estranging Xu Feng Xia on stringed instruments guzheng, sanxian and guqin somehow leaps from Eugene Chadbourne's rips to the crystalline swirls of Malian kora, to the gauzy harp sweeps of a Disney dream scene. Nostradamus ends the world in 1999, the Chinese nation — a quarter of us, after all — wakes, observes, invades.

in brief hiphop

Reviewed by **Dave Tompkins**

Absolut Beginner featuring Samy Deluxe Fuchse
BUBACK/MOTOR MUSIC 5611632 12
Absolut Beginner is from Hamburg, Germany. The language barrier is easily overcome if you nod harder or headbutt your way through it. Absolut Beginner deserves plaudits far outside US comparison, but partner MC Denyo sounds like Buckshot Shorty at his grittiest. Rhyming with a cunning grin and scrunched nostrils, Samy Deluxe is the German freestyle king. Dramatic piano chops and strings vanish into a synthesizer sub-bassline stalking their morphonetic flows down a reverberating stainless steel corridor. 'Fuchse' means 'foxes'. But if you understand what Absolut Beginner says, then you're in even deeper scheisse than you thought.

Del The Funky Homosapien Phoney Phranchise HIEROGLYPHIC IMPERIUM PROMO 12"
Some records you buy for the things Del The Funky Homosapien says, such as *"With my headphones slammin'/Playing Iron Maiden/Sleeping in the lobby of the Day's Inn."* Though elderly, Del's baritone breath control is timeless. He's valedictorian of Handsome Boy Modeling School and lyrical progenitor of Oakland's Hieroglyphics crew, which includes Souls Of Mischief and Pep Love. Domino's "Phoney Phranchise" remix of rhythmic Metal guitar salvos is the perfect fit for Del's hip disc locution. "Press Rewind" has an ominous horn surge stretching across battlefield mist. Then Domino's piano/horn section counterpunches you into a pulp, which in turn becomes the paper upon which Del writes his lyrics, rolls his spliff and makes mirth. *"You're peaking like you've eaten a hundred microdots."* On "Master Minds" Del's track sounds like the 1941 *Wolfman* credits — howl included — a string lupus referencing Wu Tang producer RZA on a full moon.

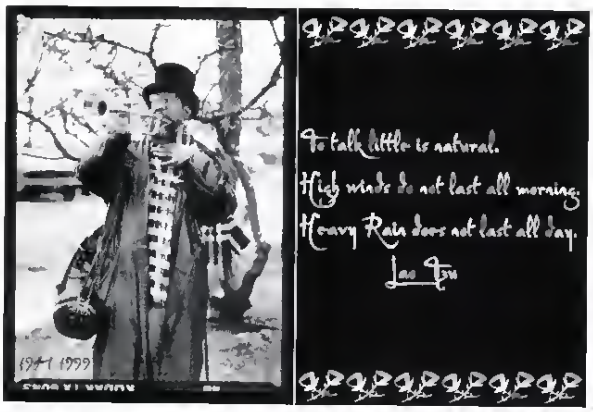
Group Home The Legacy REPLAY 36003 12
Group Home is Lil' Dap and Melachi The Nutcracker. They rhyme from a furrowed brow, straightforward across the ghetto-scarred lines. As with Group Home's 1995 *Living Proof* LP, DJ Premier's production on "The Legacy" is a dead-on beat description for emoting lyrics that are cold and know no other way. The vocal track also factors in a guest appearance by Gang Starr's Guru, whose 'tone' complements the monotones of the others. Premier's glistening guitar loop ponders, before deciding on the perfect chord to repeat in stabbed unison with the horns. And Nutcracker? Well, he's just *"trying to keep my ass outta jail."*

MF Doom Operation Doomsday FONDLE EM FEB6 LP
When the Long Island trio KMD — makers of the crucial 1991 LP *Mr Hood* — disintegrated, Zev Love X was left feeling like he was in hell wearing trousers made of petrol. Coping with the death of brother/partner DJ Subroc, he wrote "Gas Drawls" (complete with nice Steely Dan riff) and mutated into MF Doom, a persona inspired the metal-faced villain of Marvel Comics' *Fantastic Four*. The world should be so blessed in the face of its demise. *Operation Doomsday* includes a clawful of previously released singles: "Gas Drawls", "Greenbacks" and "Hey!", which sampled a brass section from a *Scobby Doo* cartoon. The album has an endearing demo feel, sounding like it was taped in an upended bedroom that had been through the Batman spin cycle. The vocals are superimposed on the mix, as if Doom is freestyling on the radio. "Rhymes Like Dimes" could have come from 91 or 99, as Doom observes, *"Only in America could you find a way to earn a healthy buck/and still keep your attitude on self-destruct."* Almost every track reprises and Doom's meta-life interludes are sampled dialogue (*"mask conforms to my twisted features"*) from the original Dr Doom comic. Meanwhile, his crew Monster Isle derives its name from the Godzilla classic *Destroy All Monsters*. Doom's choice of cheesy 80s R&B loops is peculiar (SOS Band and The Deele?) but sadness, droll wit and mic legerdemain make this record peachy keen. Hearing Doom karaoke to Atlantic Starr's 87 sap-ballad "Always" is affirmation enough.

Non-Prophets Drop Bass EMERGE MUSIC EM001 12
Non-Prophets hail from Rhode Island, New York. On "I Keep Calling" MC Sage Francis rhymes like a man lost inside his own head asking a gas station attendant for directions to get out. Produced by Joseph Beats, "I Keep Calling" has a spectral Asian lilt that recalls Coldcut's "Seven Minutes Of Madness" remix of Eric B & Rakim's "Paid In Full". The same lilt keeps on haunting for 90 seconds at the end, while DJ Perseus cuts the beat into a slower cadence. The "Drop Bass" and "Bounce" tracks deceptively read like a DJ Magic Mike Miami Bass tape, but Sage's rhymes — *"Hold the mic like prison bars"* — send you back to read it again. Even as he blusters *"HipHop is a disgrace"*, this single argues otherwise. On "Bounce", a Gabor Szabolsh guitar attempts to comfort Sage who has been bent double by his entendre: *"I've been mad/I've been a madman/I've been a goody two shoes/who walks barefooted in a bad land."*

Planet Asia Place Of Birth/The Professional ABB ABB1009 12"
Two necessities are Planet Asia's self-titled 9B EP and his work on Peanut Butter Wolf's remix of "Definition Of Ill" (with Lootpack's Madlib). Dilated Peoples' Evidence produced "Place Of Birth" (Fresno, Northern California) and its high pitch piano emulates the crosswalk warning signal in *Blade Runner*. Now in Oakland, Planet Asia *"busts veins on microphones"* with his hardline New York-tinged delivery. On "The Professional" (produced by Architect), a horn sails past and crashes into a pudgy-fingered piano note. Nas's *"rebel to America"* hook cuts in, after which Planet Asia makes *"million man marches over beats."* When he says *"I clutch moments"*, he might well be hinting that there's no better time than now to grab this.

Redman & Method Man Black Out! DEF JAM 3145466092 CD/LP
Redman have been itching to do this ever since their "How High?" duet of 95, when Meth and Red took a weeded-out spin in an ice-cream truck. During *Black Out*'s skulk-funk intro, Redman moans a melody of dank basement isolation, while on "Cereal Killer" (produced by Wu Tang's RZA), he sabotages over a vamping guitar *"Take nuts and screws outta ferns wheels."* Meth periodically checks into the rhyme of last resort (*"Like Tyson, bite an ear"?*) but executes some taut syncopation on "YOU" on which his syllables alternate cadences with producer Eric Sermon's thumpingest track of the LP, made up from a choppy Morse code of guitar stabs, rimshots and shakers. The caterwauling guitar of Joe Farrell's "Upon This Rock" gets looped again on "Run For Cover", upon which Wu Tang's Ghostface inexplicably rhymes about Keanu Reeves in bedslippers and playing professional golf with Jack Nicklaus. "Da Rockwilder" sounds like a bad Trans Am synthesizer beat. Tracks get a little lacklustre when hooks by A Tribe Called Quest, Cypress Hill and Beastie Boys are recycled, as if confirming that Russell Simmons's Def Jam label runs on an extremely tight schedule.



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in brief jazz

Reviewed by **Julian Cowley**

Gustavo Aguilar Dreaming With Serpents ACOUSTIC LEVITATION AL1001 CD
Wadada Leo Smith's lucid trumpet graces one track and the closing piece focuses on Tbod Sickafoose's double bass. Otherwise this album is devoted to the interplay of various percussion instruments. Aguilar's own playing and the presence of John Bergamo ensure that a high level of invention is sustained but that early glimpse of Smith's trumpet remains tantalising.

John Wolf Brennan/Gene Coleman/Christian Wolfarth Momentum LEO LR274 CD
Pago Libre Wake Up Call LEO LR272 CD
Last October, Coleman, a bass clarinettist from Chicago, joined pianist Brennan and percussionist Wolfarth in Zurich for this concert performance. There's diagrammatic chasteness to their sparsely configured playing. As is usual when Brennan is involved, close attention is paid to timbral nuance, and although this isn't the kind of music that lodges immediately in the memory, it sustains interest through skilfully controlled inflection.
Wake Up Call documents another concert recording, in Sicily in 1997. Brennan has run Pago Libre with bassist Daniele Patumi for more than a decade, and this is their third album. Tscho Theissing's acidic violin and Arcady Shilkoper's mellifluous French horn complete the instrumentation, with piano and double bass manoeuvring between their distinctive voicings. The music, widely allusive without being derivative, locates spacious individual probings between passages of alert ensemble work.

Michel F Côté Compil Zouave AMBIANCES MAGNETIQUES AM067 CD
A lush version of Henry Mancini's "Lujon" opens *Compil Zouave*, which conforms to the label's customary taste for genre-bending assemblages. Drummer Cote presides over a large cast including Pierre Bastien, allocated the task of evoking Miles Davis, and Serge Boisvert, set to work on Chet Baker. Jazz, rock and reggae sounds are filtered through sensibilities honed by electroacoustic lawlessness. Simultaneously ironic and luxuriant, and at times reminiscent of Can.

Bruce Eisenbeil's Crosscurrent Trio Mural CIMP 194 CD
Electric guitarist Eisenbeil is developing a distinctive voice which should appeal to fans of Joe Morris. His scurrying, skittering style generates animated fluxations, which are integrated successfully within the overall group sound, partly on account of his muted trebly tone, partly because bassist Jason Brunka and drummer Ryan Sawyer are so obviously attuned to Eisenbeil's approach.

Ellery Eskelin/Andrea Parkins/Jim Black Five Other Pieces (+2) HATOLOGY 533 CD
This is Eskelin imagining what The Mahavishnu Orchestra's vibrant "Dance Of Maya" would sound like scored for tenor, percussion and accordion. The disc also includes comparably eccentric readings of Lennie Tristano's "April", Coltrane's "India", Charlie Haden's "Song For Che" and Gershwin's 'Prelude II". The saxophonist's quirky vision doesn't detract from his substantial musicality, and seasoned collaborators Parkins and Black shine especially on the two unfettered originals closing the album.

Rick Faulkner Waiting For The Rain LAUGHING BUDDAH LBP99004 CD
Trombonist Faulkner was a founding member of the New York Ska Jazz Ensemble. Pan-Caribbean touches surface occasionally on *Waiting For The Rain*, yet it is unequivocally a jazz album, and a warmly inviting one at that. Faulkner's own assured playing is supported by a staunch group, including altoist Marty Ehrlich and Patience Higgins from The David Murray Big Band, on baritone. Both repay the generous space for soloing allowed them with an exuberance that complements Faulkner's own.

Steven Lantner & Mat Maneri Reaching LEO LAB 062 CD
New Englanders Lantner, on variable pitch digital synthesizer and piano, and Maneri, on fretless electric violins, produce a set of challenging microtonal variations. Their fine inscriptions of line and point are decisively made, but an attractive fragility is created through their adventurous departures from intervallic norms. That this austere and sophisticated improvisation takes microtonality as its means rather than its end makes all the difference.

The Peggy Lee Band The Peggy Lee Band SPOOL LINES CD
Lee's group includes trumpeter Brad Turner, trombonist Jeremy Berkman, guitarist Tony Wilson and bassist Chris Tarry, with regular collaborator Dylan Van Der Schyff on drums and electronics. She can scrape and stridulate as required, but her cello playing also grants due place to clarity of line and sweetness of tone. Both aspects of Lee's musical character inform her compositions and their performance by an entirely sympathetic sextet.

Susanna Lindeborg & Ove Johansson Duo Structures LJ RECORDS LJ5222 CD
In 1981, Trevor Watts made a record called *Stella Maiu* with Katrina Krimsky. *Duo Structures* brings it to mind as a parallel coupling of classically inclined, rather grand pianist and robust, sinewy saxophonist. *Stella Maiu* suffered from being larded with echo. *Duo Structures* is impaired by unwelcome electronic washes and programmed percussion.

Francine Luce Bò Kay La Vi-a OGUN OG012 CD
Luce is a singer from Martinique who keeps exemplary company. Here she airs her compositions with combinations of Evan Parker, Paul Rutherford, Keith Tippett, Paul Rogers, Louis Moholo and Claude Deppa. Her writing furnishes an emotional and evocative springboard, but the further Luce is drawn into free improvisation the more convincing her vocalising sounds. Yet, given the personnel, the music's dynamics are in general surprisingly subdued.

Eyvind Kang/Dylan Van Der Schyff/François Houle Pieces Of Time SPOOL SPL104 CD
Violinist Kang participated in Bill Frisell's 1996 Quartet recording. Houle recently released an impressive tribute to clarinettist John Carter. Here both adapt to a freeform context that radiates from Van Der Schyff's gestural percussion. As often when a pointillistic approach to collective improvisation predominates, the end results are uneven.

Wynton Marsalis Mr Jelly Lord Standard Time Vol 6 COLUMBIA/SONY CLASSICAL CK69872 CD
The errant virtuoso directs his horn homewards, in acknowledgement of fellow son of New Orleans, Jelly Roll Morton. Marsalis conceived the project as a demonstration of "the contemporary power" of early jazz, and to that end assembled a group which, for one track, includes Harry Connick Jr on piano. The result is characteristically scrupulous but rarely matches the vitality of Morton's own best recordings, or indeed of Marsalis's memorable debut in 1981.

Tony Marsh/Steve Franklin/Tim Crowther Shell Of Certainty VISION LOGIC VLG101 CD
Marsh has long been one of the most tactfully effective drummers working at the freer edges of British jazz. Here his pulsing articulations lead the ear through a welter of electronic swirls conjured from Franklin's keyboards and Crowther's guitar. This is trio improvisation of considerable intensity, with Marsh's energised figures traced across a field of relentlessly bold abstraction.

Rava/Danielsson/Allouche/Lazarevith/Magnoni Andata Senza Ritorno YVP MUSIC 3074 CD
Flugelhorn player Enrico Rava's association with bassist Palle Danielsson extends back to *The Pilgrim And The Stars*, recorded in 1975. Both have steered a fairly even course since then, and this set of compositions by tenor saxophonist Maurice Magnoni offers them secure berth in familiar waters. Drummer Joel Allouche is appropriately supportive, but guitarist Serge Lazarevitch's excessive fondness for swell effects may induce queasiness.

Romano/Sclavis/Texier/Le Querrec Carnet De Routes Suite Africaine LABEL BLEU LBLC6609 CD
The burnished sound of Louis Sclavis's clarinet takes on additional patina when set between Henri Texier's rich, emollient double bass and Aldo Romano's crisp drumming. The trio's 1997 tour of East and South Africa is reflected in this recently recorded set of rhythmically intricate and melborically alluring pieces. Sclavis's accommboation of folk materials takes on an additional dimension, his partners show themselves equally amenable to African influences, and the result is beguiling. The lavish packaging incorporates a book of Guy Le Querrec's tour photographs. An outstanding release.

Neil Sadler Theory Of Forms BLEEDING ARTS BA10012 CD
A horn section comprising the Fowler brothers, Albert Wing and Kurt McGettrick plus high profile guitarist Mike Keneally equals instant cult status among Zappa aficionados, but Sadler's music merits more widespread attention. His complex, oblique scores generate vigorous, purposeful music, architectonically rugged yet sufficiently pliable to offer surprising twists and turns. Sadler's keyboard work adds Gothic flourishes of the kind that Don Preston has supplied for Michael Mantler. A conceptually mature and brilliantly executed amalgam.

Tricolor Mirth + Feckless ATAVISTIC ALP108 CD
Jeff Parker, guitarist with Tortoise and Isotope 217°, shows pragmatic determination to sustain the groove while refusing to fetishise technique. Eschewing flamboyance, his playing with Tricolor consistently hits the spot with tastefully subdued licks. Tatsu Aoki, suitably feline on bass, and David Pavkovic, relatively ebullient at the drums, display comparably precise judgement across a series of wry, understated pieces. ☐

in brief outer limits

Reviewed by **Brian Duguid**

Artemiy Artemiev Mysticism Of Sound ELECTROSHOCK ELCD009 CD
The son of Russian film composer Edward Artemiev Artemiy crafts gloomy forests of synthesizer music which shift from cliche to cliche — what you get is imagistic electronic music relying heavily on easily decoded sonorities The dense web of vibration offers little in the way of melody or rhythm and much in the way of impressionistic atmospherics That said it s not without surprise or interest and some of the echoed voices groaning sound effects and rumbling miasmas are effectively oppressive But the over-reliance on reverb and echo is just a disguise for lazy music making

Nigel Ayers/John Everall/ Mick Harris Mesmeric Enabling Device SOLEILMOON SOL85 CD
Here s a trio who filled me with high hopes only to dash them Nigel Ayers s iconoclastic Nocturnal Emissions have often come up with something singular and skewed, while John Everall (of Tactile) and Mick Harris usually produce something more detached and downbeat Here they create soundscapes from each other s recordings but unfortunately greyness wins out shrouding everything in mulchy ash with occasional drizzly beats providing the only relief from isolationist gloom

Brume & Toy Bizarre De Zee KDI DCTB57 STAALPLAAT STCD038 CD
The plentiful expedience of environmental collage and assorted cacophony gathered by these two French electroacoustic undergrounders shows on this collaborative disc Brume usually a nonstop noisemaker, seems to have learned from Toy Bizarre s more considered approach the drilling drones, blundering tape gurgling, hooting chickens and inexplicable rhythms are put together with almost lyrical patience The odd ear-shredding leap in volume aside this is a fine, thoughtful work

Chessie Meet DROP BEAT SPL12 CD
Meet is all over the post-dance electronica shop Gloomy winds howl while distorted breakbeats and junkyard loops flicker across the horizon A hive of dolorous whistles Eno-like organ, flapping beats and scuzzy noise make one track a clear highlight, while the twilit serenity and crimpled rhythms do the same for another Some live bass playing and melancholy piano work well, elsewhere the music skips from pastoral guitar through to reverberating drone reverie via devolved noisescapes

Foehn Silent Light SWARF FINGER SF037 CD
Foehn is the solo project of Deb Parsons (once of Third Eye Foundation) and *Silent Light* is her second album It's difficult at first to get a handle on, but for a start try imagining *noirish* TripHop minus the 'hop' Think of late night, blacklashed depression for anyone who finds tapping a foot too taxing It never quite descends into goth melodrama, however retaining a refined sense of composition for most of its 20 plus tracks The introduction of singing on the watery "Time Moves Like Slow Beats' offers one real highlight as does the shuffling beat on the finale 'You Make Me Sick" The rest is ultimately too homogenous and uninvolving

Fergus Kelly Invisible City PROJECT PRESS ISBN 1872493157 CD
City-based soundscapes seem to be ten-a-penny nowadays Kelly s aim is to focus on the environmental sounds that we normally screen out and the result, the Dublin based *Invisible City* is certainly one of the more successful pieces of this genre He manages to process, layer repeat and distort source sounds without losing their character creating something more rhythmic and musically considered than comparable works The sounds remain finely balanced on the edge of recognition and even if *Invisible City* only rarely genuinely evokes its Dublin origins, it's still very much a success

Dave Knott Natura Naturans ANOMALOUS NOT1 CD
Now here's a find Knott was first introduced to fellow improvisor Jeph Jerman as a 'guitarist' which wasn t entirely misleading since his homemade instruments did at least occasionally use guitar strings But these unpretentious slabs of wood have a frank physicality and grounding in space that the guitar lacks and this record of Knott's solo improvisations offers a highly personal vision Plucked tapped struck, bowed, rubbed, teased it's easy to hear the unaffected thrill of invention and discovery as Knott pulls formless unpretty pings and shimmers from the stringboards *Natura Naturans* is a motley playful encyclopedia of strung-out tension ranging from jittery rhythm through to soft washed out glinting tones At once ugly and beautiful the music is always open, unpredictable and rather marvellous

Egnekn Montgomery The Sound Of Lamination FIREWORK EDITION FER1016 CD
In 1989 Generator Montgomery s New York gallery-cum-record shop, acquired a laminating machine Normally used for coating ID cards and photos in transparent plastic in these new hands it became a way of transforming a far greater variety of personal detritus Stickers pancakes, eggshells, bubblewrap noodles and much else all found its way into the laminator, which with the aid of an amplifier became the source of the great rippling tectonic groaning and droning sounds documented on two lengthy lamination rituals Unlike say, the machine drone experiments of Dutch artist Paul Panhuysen this has a less serious immediacy of intent the fun of instant transformation is more important than any artistic conceit The CD comes boxed with various colour prints and texts offering helpful insight into Montgomery s philosophy and investing the drones with a little more significance

Ocosi [IN] NEGATIVE AIR RESEARCH NAR05 CD
Take one 16 minute recording of drum loops courtesy of Mick Harris and chop loop slice and recombine until you get — what? Ocosi s CD sounds good on paper minimal rhythms Dark Ambient Trance music to hypnotise cows with perhaps But bludgeoned by eight unrelenting, unchanging loops all cut from the same despondent cloth, you'll find yourself more numbed than entranced Occasionally, juddering waves of distortion ripping through the murky ambience to provide some light relief, but not often enough Come on guys get out more Go to a club, drop some E anything

Synapscape So What ANT ZEN ACT87 2XCD
Take some mid-80s Industrial EBM, mix in some late 80s Ardkore Techno switch distortion to max mix well and you have *So What* As you let yourself be pummelled by tremendously brutal beats try not to wince as bison hooves thunder across your body Synapscape evidently believe in catharsis through anger and unrelenting energy and there s no shortage of either on the first of the two discs It's not all Sturm und Drang however A few tracks show off an equally mechanical but slightly less oppressive methodology and others have an open-minded metallic funkiness Following the public rehabilitation of scumnoisers like Merzbow and Masonna perhaps it s the turn of the branch of Industrial outcasts represented by Synascape s ilk?

Peter Uhr Fire Symphony FIREWORK EDITION FER1013 2XCD
The time's ripe for reclaiming the term 'cosmic music' from the Tangerine Dreams and Klaus Schulzes of the world and composer Peter Uhr may be the man for the job At the heart of the two hour *Fire Symphony* is a grand piano on a bonfire its metal strings melted down and recast as a 'tone bowl' Uhr's music on the ex-piano is evocative, rumbling, an attempt to tap into a vibrational essence but it's only one of the cosmic vistas on offer The avant-accordion of "White Waltz" and the driftwood marimba of "Wood Piece" offer a ramshackle human primitivism "Sea Song" and "Ro/White Peace" seek the primitive essence in the environment — the latter sites two mics with unshielded cables on an island at night, picking up odth insect sounds and various radio signals "Cosmic Song" is an accidental duet for singers (in vaguely Cornelius Cardew/Scratch Orchestra style) and computer printers Finally "Road Piece" taps into the nervous system of the cosmos itself wringing and scraping taut harmonies out of the tone bowl and a tortured cello before transforming both into the sound of car hurtling through a windy night At last a concept album with imagination conviction and the courage to experiment

Various Artists Bowed + Popped NUR NICHT NUR 1990203 CD
Various Artists Rubbed + Blown NUR NICHT NUR 1990421 CD
Two enigmatic discs in metal tins documenting anti-modernist free-thinking current German experimental composition *Rubbed + Blown* is by far the less successful despite owing as much to musique concrete as it does to wind or string instruments It s just too amorphous and purposeless Despite its huge debt to the 60s, *Bowed + Popped* is more intriguing Michael Vorfeld s "x+x+x" is all fragmentary pitter-patter and sonorously bowed cymbals Stephan Froleyks's "Hispeedo" takes intricate rhythmic patterns as the source for impressionistic texture rather than minimalist counterpoint although the addition of some found voice and crowd recordings help to puzzle Hans Tammen's piece for bowed styrofoam, a shrill chorus of squeaks pops and clicks is the most humorous of these three

The Wonderphone Project ALBEDO ALBCD018 CD
Cynically this is a very gimmicky release 15 environmental recordings made through headphones specially modified to filter the sound Fortunately even before I heard the CD (designed, of course to be listened to on the free headphones provided) my cynicism had been completely disarmed It is boxed with colour cards showing photos of the modified headphones tubes containers or cones are attached to filter the sounds of the surroundings, and without exception they re charming and poetic creations The satelitt ("to receive signals from outer space") and sn ' ("for listening to snow falling") are my personal favourites, but they re all fresh and surprisingly thought-provoking And as a response to consumer mass market colonisation of the listening experience they re wonderful

charts

Playlists from the outer limits of planet sound

Headspace 15

Icebreaker Distant Early Warning (Aesthetics)
Dntel Rewind & Remixes (CD-R)
Solvent Solvently One Listens (Suction)
Languis Soft Music 7" (Simball Sounds)
Aeric Toute Façon (Ladomat 2000)
Nobody Earthtones EP (Ubiquity)
To Rococo Rot Cars EP (City Slang)
The Stranger LP (Phthalo)
Various Voices In My Lunchbox Vol 2 (Plug Research)
Fonn Field B31 (Fat Cat)
Crank Heftibag (Mille Plateaux)
Kohn (Kohn)2 (K-RAA-K)
Mice Parade Ramda (Bubblecore)
Cinematic Orchestra Motion (Ninja Tune)
OST Live@Nina's (Phthalo)
Compiled by DJ Hoseeh? Headspace KXLU 88.9 FM Los Angeles USA Thursdays Fridays 1-3am

Borderline 15

Dominique A Remue (Lithium)
Acid Mothers Temple Pataphisical Freak Out MUI (PSF)
Tony Allen Black Voices (Comet)
Nels Cline & Gregg Bendian Interstellar Space (Atavistic)
Innerzone Orchestra Programmed (Talkin' Loud)
Isotope 217° Utonian Automatic (Thrill Jockey)
Piano Magic Low Birth Weight (Rocket Girl)
Rachel's Selenography (Quarterstick)
Paul Schutze Third Site (Rykodisc)
Shinju Gumi Dissecting A Ghost (Artefact)
Squarepusher Maximum Priest EP (Warp)
Terre Thaemlitz Replicas Rubato (Mille Plateaux)
David Toop Museum Of Fruit (Caipirinha)
Ali Farka Touré Niafunke (World Circuit)
Various Warp 10+3 Remixes (Warp)
[illegible] Dirk Leise Borderline Musik Fur Grenzganger [illegible] 108.5 FM Kassel Germany [illegible] 10-11pm Fridays 2-3pm

Cuboid 15

Fizzarum Phut Of Plex 7" (City Centre Offices)
Bonnie 'Prince' Billy One With The Birds (Domino)
Krust Coded Language (Talkin' Loud)
Position Normal Jimmy And Jane (Mind Horizon)
The Auteurs How I Learned To Love The Boot Boys (Hut)
RadioBoy Afterlife Of A Machine (Antiphon)
Panasonic Lattaus (Blast First)
Innerzone Orchestra Blakula (Talkin' Loud)
Various Eva Man OST (Crippled Dick Hot Wax)
Fanatic Solid Ground (Hard Hands)
Squarepusher Selection Sixteen (Warp)
Rob Swift All This Scratching's Making Me Sick (Asphodel)
The Third Eye Foundation In Bristol With A Pistol (Domino)
Statik Sound System Loadstar (More Rockers/IK7)
Various Carnival Of Souls OST
Compiled by The Cube Cinema 4 Princess Row Bristol Web www.irational.org/cube

Freezone: Sound And Vision 15

Lobe Hibernation (Sub [illegible])
Sneakster Pseudo Nouveau (Bella Union)
Russell Mills Undark/Pearl+Umbra (Bella Union)
Icebreaker Distant Early Warning (Aesthetics)
Aedena Cycle Cargo Cult (Beatservice)
Hakan Lidbo Before The Beginning (Apni)
The Foundry Mote (Foundry)
Roedelius Drive Global Trotters Projekt Vol 1 (Rykodisc)
Kismet North Atlantic Balkan Express (Tone Casualties)
Cathars Amorpheus (Miaumiau)
Plasmalamp Void Travelling (Worm Interface)
Brendan Perry Eye Of The Hunters (4AD)
David Sylvian
Dead Bees On A Cake (Virgin)
Holger Czukay
Good Morning Story
(Tone Casualties)
Steve Roach
Light Fantastic (Fathom)
Compiled by Marjan Kostadinovski
Freezone Sound And Vision
Kanal 103 FM Skopje
Republic of Macedonia
e-mail marjank@forum.com.mk

More Dodgy Group Names

Beerzone
Gruntsplatter
Fatal Flying Guillotines
Men Of Porn
Brother Brick
DJ Darknorse
Chewy Marble
Christ On Parade
Finery Scrawled
Land Of The Loops
Saukrates & Xzibit
The Actor's Pedantry
Erupt Mob featuring Bumpy Knuckles
Jack Off Jill
A [illegible] from DJ [illegible] The [illegible]

The Office Ambience

Sonic Youth Goodbye 20th Century (SYR)
Various Clicks & Cuts (Mille Plateaux)
Ryuichi Sakamoto Raw Life Tokyo (WEA Japan)
Scott Walker Pola X (Barclay)
Motorhead Everything Louder Than Everyone Else (Cleopatra)
Mike Cooper Kiribata (Hipshot)
MASS From Zero (Paratactile)
The Beastie Boys The Sound Of Science (Grand Royal)
Jeremy Boyle Songs From The Guitar Solos (Southern)
Bobby Conn Lovesongs EP (Thrill Jockey)
Voice Crack Infra Red (Uhlang)
Ko-Wreck Technique Ko-Wreckt1on EP (Warp)
Alternative TV The Image Has Cracked (Anagram)
Do Make Say Think Besides EP (Resonant)
Compiled by The Wire Sound System

Ali Farka Touré

the compiler

New compilations: reviewed, rated, reviled

The New World Order's notion of a helping hand is a bombing war, a rebuilding — of law and border — fashioned to suit the privatisers now arriving, their ignorance of all things local only matched by their smiling indifference. Sidestepping such horrors, ***Balkan Blues: Souffles De L'Ame*** (Network LC675933 B5B 2xCD) is a gorgeously packaged set of pan-Balkan music from Serbia, Bosnia, Albania, Macedonia and further-flung 'nations' not as yet destabilised. It attempts quietly to invoke an undivided subcontinental dreamstate, an imagined Balkans not only predating present-day chaos, but somehow beneath and behind all political arrangements — Communist, Austro-Hungarian, Ottoman — back into prehistory. This mindscreen of scholarly idealism, as attractive as it is foolish, scans the tonguetwisting vividness of these heteroglot 'hoods (where real life feuds now exist only as pretexts for superpower games) for kernels of cross-border identity and inter-ethnic exchange, shared techniques carried from valley to valley by, for example, the Rom Gypsies featured here and their professional musicianship. But the poignancy of the snapshot is that it always accelerates the transformation it seeks to deny. Perfected documentation parallels neo-imperialist incursion — and the hurling westwards of a refugee Balkan sensibility, live fragments by the thousand, will be a far less contained and coffee table affair, even, than the crackling energies and relics so nicely presented here.

Talkin' deterritorialisation blues in the context of a few splatterbeats doesn't sound so clever next to the forced emigrations and bloodbaths of the Balkans. Whatever, Kevin Martin's latest frontline anthology ***Collision Course*** (Play It Again Sam PIASXLP006 CD/2xLP) maps the blurred border zone where post-industrial noise merges with the sound system fallout of Spiral Tribe, and the doomy Techstep edges of drum 'n' bass, hardcore and HipHop. This vibrant contemporary underground is a centreless, low visibility network spanning Europe, the US, Canada and Australia. The likes of Anti-Pop Consortium, Bad Company, Sensational, Scud & Nomex and Elastic Horizons here represent a shifting and slippery scene that will always resist capture. It has no fixed canon, no stars, no easily applied formulas. Its boundaries are defined, to a large extent, in the head of the listener. It's debatable whether there's any real dialogue going on between the zones covered by Martin, but their most obvious shared characteristics are hardcore lifestyle and attitudes to sound construction, largely defined by body-punching beats and abrasive layering of noise and dark atmospherics.

In its first ten years, the West London label Reinforced has consistently pioneered breakthroughs in breakbeat science. ***Enforcers — Deadly Chambers Of Sound*** (Reinforced RIVET15 2xCD/Bx12") reveals why it remains a beacon of hope in the ever dimming drum 'n' bass landscape. The album effortlessly traverses the breakbeat spectrum, from Sci Clone's watercolour digital fusion to the darker-than-dark Techstep of Randall And Flex, while Hidden Agenda enliven some pretty linear beats with water droplet electronics and rickety percussion. With DJ Die, Photek (operating under his Special Forces alias), Alpha Omega, and the label's own G-Force and Seiji bringing up the rear, Reinforced aren't about to give up their pole position just yet.

OR Some Computer Music (OR ISSUE1 CD) is the London digi-disturbance label's issue-based series of 'audio magazines', which focuses on the rapidly expanding crop of desktop composers. Pulling from both sides of the academic-underground divide — with a determined lean toward the latter — the first issue packs 73 minutes of sonic pitch-weaving by the likes of Aphex Twin, Trevor Wishart, CD_Slopper, Kevin Drumm, Beautyon, Zbigniew Karkowski and Ramon Bauer among others. But even though it has already shaped into a sort of admirably absurdist cross between Mego and INA-GRM, it's difficult to pin down what OR stands for, other than a purposefully undefined experimentalism at the level of corrupted machines. *OR Some* — terrible pun — at least attempts to organise things. Aphex Twin is this issue's big attraction. The massively processed bongo sequences layered throughout his "perc #6" actually amount to some of the disc's most interesting, if somewhat purposeless moments. The same goes for Ubik's "Plex", which is otherwise an exhilarating display of the seductive glory of computer processing. One of the set's least likely contributions comes from Chicago-based tabletop guitarist Kevin Drumm, who leaves all trace of his acoustic work beside the console on "Feelin' Hilarious". The track staggers a barrage of heavily processed clacks and static against furious cycles of metallic clatter. As with much of the material collected here, the results are strangely gratifying once you get past the erratic syntax. ☐ *Reviewed by Sean Cooper, Dave Howell, Peter McIntyre and Mark Sinker*

directory

Labels, distributors and contacts

Labels

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AC^PI *D* Cargo

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label lore

No! 038

Fat Cat

Address PO Box 1B212 London EC1V 9XA Tel 020 7729 79B1 fax 020 7729 7991 e-mail *fatcat@mcmail.com* Web *www.fat-cat.co.uk*
UK distribution SRD
Run by Dave Cawley, Alex Knight, Dave Howell, Jamie Cruisey
Roster includes Various Artists Sigur Ros, Grain, Transient Waves, Mice Parade, Immense, Process, Foehn Janek Schaefer, Fonn, Chasm, Dr Smith & Professor Ludlow Stromba Di Lacuna, Team Doyobi
Description Electronic music without boundaries
Brief history Fat Cat was established in 1990 by Dave Cawley and Alex Knight as an electronic music record shop in Crawley After relocating to central London, the store grew into a meeting place and nerve centre for the expanding electronic music scene Having released one 12" (Web's "EVA") on Fat Cat, the store was forced to close in 1997 Cawley and Knight took their plans for the nascent label to One Little Indian (home of friend and regular Fat Cat customer Bjork) who took them under its wing Dave Howell then joined the label, launching the Split 12" series which pits divergent musicians against one another, dragging the label into increasingly leftfield territory
Statement of intent Making connections, challenging expectations supporting new artists and vital forms of underground/independent creativity Continuing the adventure while resisting, as much as possible, music industry bullshit
Other activities Having been a resident at Blood Sugar (which he ran with Andrew Weatherall), Alex Knight continues to DJ regularly, as do Dave Cawley and Fat Cat's newest recruit, Jamie Cruisey Dave Howell continues to (irregularly) publish his *Obsessive Eye* fanzine and hosts an annual multimedia event, Open Circuit, in Belgium Cawley, Knight and Lee Grainge run a new record shop, Smallfish in London's Old Street
Future plans Split series compilation CD, plus releases in various formats by Process DAT Politics, Kid 606 Christoph De Babalon Sigur Ros and Foehn

Info & manifesto Dave Howell

multi media

Rob Young goes dotty over **[The User]**'s office printer symphonies

The dot matrix printer must be one of the most discomfiting sonic feng shui devices ever invented. Like a randomly stop-starting dental drill, even a single one of these almost obsolete machines can transform a peaceful work space into an aural obstacle course littered with spasmodic whines and judders, gritty switchbacks and random alert beeps. The printwheel itself is made to dance a bee-like jig as it is enslaved to the demands of the text, line breaks and paginations of the document it's spooling out. With [The User]'s two *Symphonies For Dot Matrix Printers* — installation/mechanical performance pieces which have been doing the rounds of the world's multimedia events since late 1998 — these infernal consumer unendurables have been given a new lease of life, harnessed in the service of some of the year's finest electroacoustic sounds. [The User] are Canadian duo Thomas McIntosh and Emmanuel Madan, and their ballet mecanique is part of an ongoing attempt to sample, not just sounds, but "the whole office environment".

"We live in a time when technology defines our relationship with our environment," explains McIntosh. "Whether it be communication, the making of music or the production of food, the tools we use — the telephone, the turntable, genetic engineering — have a profound effect on processes and end results."

McIntosh and Madan have been collaborating on 'sonic research' projects for the past three years. To date they have engineered/composed two symphonies for the PC/printer rig (12 printers are actually utilised, auditioned from their 30-strong collection): the first, premiered at Montreal's FCMM festival in October 1998, appears on a new 3" CD released by the Staalplaat label, while the second was developed during a residency in Hull and has been performed since September 99.

"I was at school [when we met]," says Madan, "and bathing in the musique concrete maxim of 'tout ce qui fait du son est bon' — anything that makes sound can be used for composition, making music. One of the things we find interesting about the way that the project has developed is that while it uses 'noises' for 'musical' ends, it doesn't decontextualise the sound from its source in the way that musique concrete, or tape/electroacoustic/sampler music does. Just as acousmatic music is fundamentally about separating sound from its causal actions, so the printer symphony specifically and deliberately keeps sound and causality linked."

On CD, the minutiae of the printer sounds are revealed in all their binary finery, but the real magic of a [User] piece is revealed in performance, with McIntosh and Madan acting as system administrators amid the whirring reports of printwheel dementia. Their 'scores' are literally text files, previously typed in and loaded into a software architecture, ReDada, which syncs the machines together. "Within the limits of the printers themselves as instruments, we have a large measure of control over the sound," says Madan. "We manipulate the ASCII character set to reveal a collection of sonic events — pitches, textures, rhythms. These events can be organised on a page, and thus over time, with infinite variation. Once written, the texts function as a 'fixed media' similar to MIDI files or magnetic tape in that there is no question of interpretation: the text files sound the same each time they are printed." In fact, they include some new text files on the Staalplaat CD, and encourage listeners to send back their own customised scores and printer recordings.

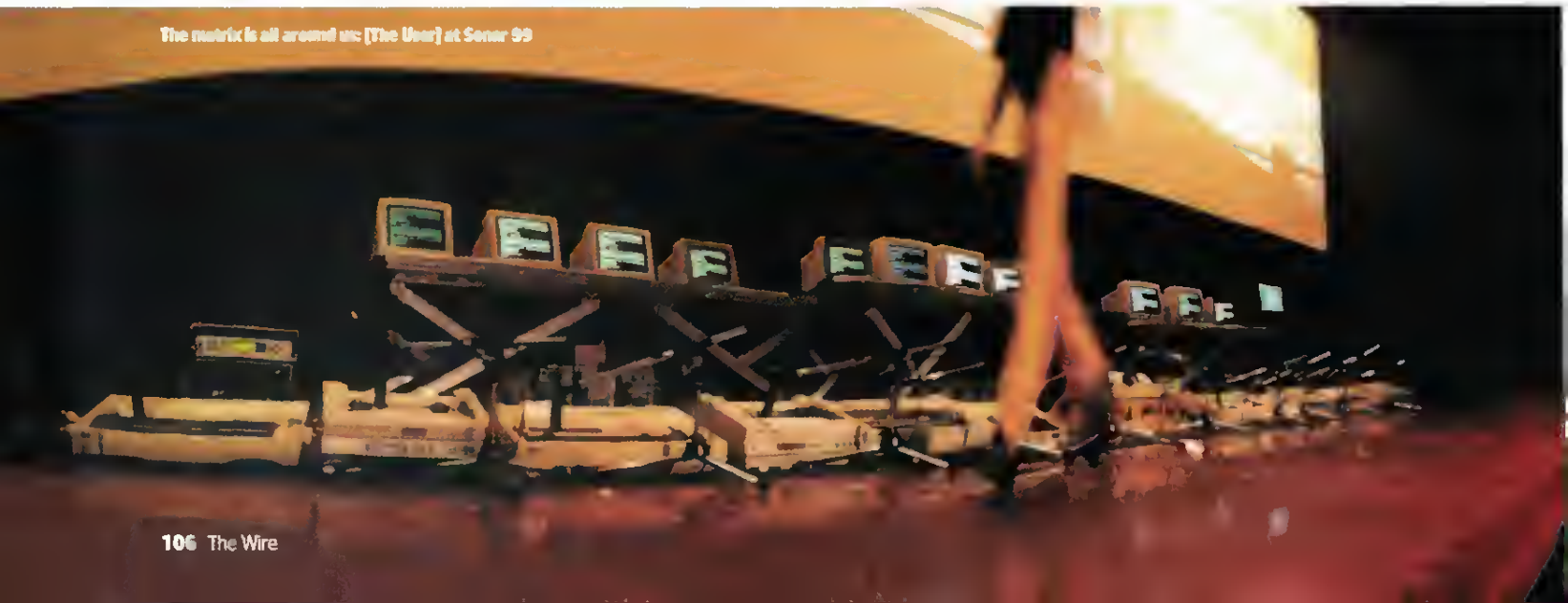
Clarifying the duo's "administrative role" in proceedings, Madan explains: "The system which runs the performance is essentially a local area network, and we are its administrators. Our role during the performance, in contrast to the highly involved process of composition, is limited to monitoring the sound, tending to the occasional paper jam and rebooting crashed PCs. More often than not, our somewhat absurd orchestra demands inordinate quantities of inherently dull file management, computer repair and network maintenance. If anything can go wrong with a collection of 1980s semiconductor equipment held together with rubber bands, camera tape and tie-wraps, then it probably already has."

If [The User] have become the 'operators' with their pocket calculators' that Kraftwerk sought to satirise in song, they extend Kraftwerk's mission by inhabiting mechanised conceptual space rather than mocking it from a distance. "The anonymous, theoretical User who is so often discussed and considered in the engineering and marketing departments of design companies does not actually exist as a subject, only an object," believes McIntosh. "Computer based systems are conceived to manage different types of Users: workers, consumers, commuters, etc. Bank machines, drink machines, photo booths in tube stations, tube stations themselves, are all ostensibly tailored to their respective Users. But there is no 'User' who actually navigates through these systems: individual people do. [The User] takes tools designed for the User and does with them things never intended by the Engineer."

Desktop publishing has placed the means of production in the hands of individuals as well as corporate publishers. But McIntosh isn't buying this new 'democracy'. "While the desktop printer may have empowered the masses, the noise pollution they caused or the fact that they are now filling landfills, cupboards and basements across the planet was never an issue for the designers or, for that matter, the consumers. Ethics and morality have been dissociated from research and development and made into their own disciplines."

McIntosh has no doubts about the durability and poignancy of electronic artforms — nor of their unique purpose. "I would compare electronic art to another medium such as painting," he says. "The colour blue and the canvas it is applied to are unlikely to become obsolete any time soon. Electronic art, unlike painting, explores a medium that is in constant flux — machines and techniques are constantly being invented or becoming obsolete. In other words, the role of technology is a question inherent in the medium rather than the 'subject' of the work — which in this case is the music. Any art, electronic or otherwise, that doesn't demonstrate an understanding of its medium will never surpass it to say something worth the effort." ❑ Symphony #1 For Dot Matrix Printers *is out now on Staalplaat. [The User] Website:* www.sat.qc.ca/the_user

PHOTO: CAROLINE HAYEUR/AGENCE STOCK PHOTO



The matrix is all around us: [The User] at Sonar 99

GO TO:

Manual Of Errors
www.manuera.com

For record collectors of all persuasions, from fusion fanatics to acid rock freaks to sound art obsessives Japan is a Pandora's box ripe for the looting As a general rule, if you can't find it there, it's time to look for another hobby Manual Of Errors is an on-line shop run from the collector's paradise, Tokyo, which regularly posts its acquisitions on a Web page, as well as descriptions of vinyl quality in English, and prices in yen Not only do they stock some of the most outlandish sounds ever inscribed on tape, but they also hold videos and books, plus an 'etc' section that includes an ultra-rare case for the Roland TB-303 drum machine. A brief glance at the 'E' section includes Enoch Light And The Light Brigade, Electrik Kokernut and Ernest Hemingway Something for everyone, then

Optigan.com
www.optigan.com

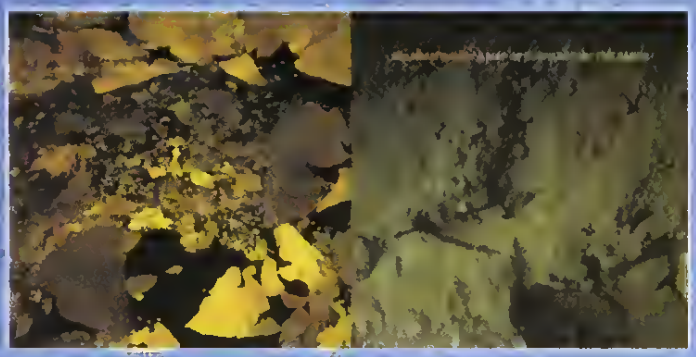
Websites for synth and instrument fetishists are ten a penny on the Net, but this one takes the biscuit The Optigan was a keyboard built by toy company Mattel in the 70s and which produced sounds by reading signals from LP-sized discs It has since become the weird organ of choice for the likes of Steven Jesse Bernstein, Blonde Redhead, Blur, Tom Waits and the American group Optiganally Yours, whose *Spotlight On* album is quite possibly a lost classic of Incredibly Strange Music. Here, you can find out far more more than you will ever need to know about this cumbersome beast, including the Trivial Pursuit-winning fact that the Optigan was the first instrument to be advertised on TV

ROB YOUNG

print run

New music books: read, raved about, rushed up

Deep by design: Jon Wozencroft's art

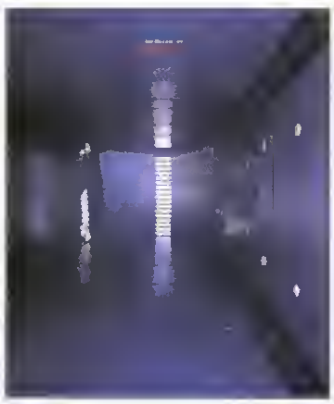


Touch And Fuse

By Jon Wozencroft

TOUCH TO 1 HBK £20 PBK £14

Jon Wozencroft's designs make your eyes feel like remote sensors. His work decorates the sleeves of many of the CDs on the Touch, Ash International (RIP), DR, R&S, Sub Rosa and Swim labels, and he has pretty much claimed the use of the remarkably beautiful DIN Mittelschrift font as his own territory. Unlike the mannered virtuosity of the Designers Republic or Tomato, or the much feted Vaughan Oliver's filigree and shadow designs for the



4AD label, which often window-dressed some fairly naked examples of third rate indie rock, Wozencroft's clinical, cool (in the best sense) image making produced material of considerable substance. Whether using one of his stilled, hushed photographs of a contemporary modernist architectural interior, a found print of trainee Chinese riflewomen, or a plane of smeared lettering, his layouts make you feel like you should be *looking harder* — and by extension listening deeper.

Touch And Fuse is a 'best of' monograph anthologising Wozencroft's CD sleeves, posters (including unused sketches) and writings over the past decade — from Hafler Trio manifestos to Mika Vainio digipacks. Working as he does alongside a largely wordless musical medium, it becomes extra important for the package to speak its mind through the clothes it wears. Wozencroft is outspoken about the way media and advertising often reduce design and packaging to 'colourful foam', and he sets out to redress the problem.

He is enamoured of video screenshots — making the viewer always the secondary observer — but evades the pornography of the hidden camera. *you* choose how innocent or charged the image (a caterpillar on a leaf, a speeding boat, an overhead cityscape) should become. He can make a jumbo jet touchdown or the ragged edge of a woven tablemat seem equally worthy of contemplation. It is surprising how often he has resorted to rural images: using close-ups of cacti, forest trails, graveyards and the like. Wozencroft's elegant arrangements make nature and technology appear less divisible. In his work, woodland is perceived as a vast and complex organism, a church is revealed as a machine for making sense of mystery.

ROB YOUNG

Writings Of The Vienna Aktionists

Edited and translated by Malcolm Green

ATLAS PBK £15.99

Half a century before the advent of 'Viennese Aktionism', Zurich Dada inspired the following press comment: "They are men possessed, outcasts, maniacs, and all for love of their work. They turn to the public as if asking its help, placing before it the materials to diagnose their sickness." The activities of the Aktionists in the mid-60s merit much the same summary.

It's unlikely, however, that the Dadaists could have even imagined the kind of excesses that the Aktionists would go on to perpetrate. The four artists documented here — Gunter Brus, Hermann Nitsch, Otto Muehl and Rudolph Schwarzkogler — have achieved extensive notoriety outside the German-speaking world although they weren't the only Austrian artists engaged in an unprecedented expansion of art beyond painting through performance into a radical confrontation with the body.

Gunter Brus, for instance, had left behind action painting for a more dramatic art painting his own body. His quest for an analytical monodrama led to one performance where he cut himself with a razor blade, urinated, defecated, vomited and masturbated. The group performances of his close ally Otto Muehl were concerned with the breaking of social taboos rather than self-exploration, leading him ultimately to quit art and form a commune dedicated to constant creativity and free love.

Hermann Nitsch is perhaps the best known of the four, having conscientiously developed his Orgies Mystery Theatre for more than three decades now. His public spectacles employ noise music, communal feasting and reinvented Dionysian blood rituals. Rudolph Schwarzkogler has on many occasions been the most misunderstood. His photos of himself and colleagues bloodied, bound and bandaged have a sense of staged detachment that the others only rarely sought.

Malcolm Green's translations of their original

writings I combined with a thought-provoking introduction, and many photos and reproductions of original documentation) provide the opportunity to view Aktionism shorn of many of the myths half-truths and bias that often stood in for reportage of their work Schwarzkogler's recipes offer insight into the fastidious perfectionism of his search for objectivity in ritual In some of the most insightful material here, Nitsch s writings provide an antidote to the usual reductionist summaries of his performances His descriptions of their relationship to Christian symbolism Jungian and Freudian psychoanalysis sexual imagery, alchemy Greek myth and much more, emphasise the complexity and openness to reinterpretation of all the Aktionists work

Reminding us of its political dimension, psychiatric and police reports show that despite their occasional claims to the contrary Muehl and Brus were greatly interested in the public reaction to their work Muehl's conviction for whipping a consenting masochist rehearsed some of the issues of the UK s more recent Spanner case, but its context as art begs the question of whether the Aktionist assault on propriety and authority was more or less effective because of its aesthetic framing

It's easy in many of Muehl s pieces to discern the sexual arrogance that, decades afterwards would see him take an increasingly authoritarian role within his commune (he was convicted for rape of minors in 1990) Despite this he was always the most humorous and satirical of the four featured here His "Rules For Selecting Art College Professors seek to replace favouritism by meritocracy candidates would be awarded points for the weight of their penis and beauty of their turds

The journey made by the Aktionists in the mid-60s offered a blueprint for many performers and artists to come COUM Transmissions the group which would later become Throbbing Gristle, owed a conscious debt to all the Aktionists and displayed a similar rejection of Fluxus-inspired tomfoolery in their favouring of highly personal body art Genesis P-Orridge's later creation of the pseudo cult Temple Ov Psychick Youth and his exile from Britain amid hysterical and later discredited accusations of child abuse mirrored Muehl s uneasy history

Nonetheless the desire to achieve self-determination through the transgression of social norms has rarely been pursued with the conviction that the Aktionists brought to the task They touched a raw nerve in Austrian society receiving hate mail that frequently contained responses far more obscene and violent than anything in their own art Their importance to a contemporary tradition long concerned with dissolving the boundaries between art and life is enormous, and this compendium of their own views ensures that the ambiguity, humour and diversity of their work comes to the fore

BRIAN DUGUID

The Vibe History Of HipHop

Edited by Alan Light

PLEXUS PBK £16 99

The HipHop Years: A History Of Rap

By Alex Ogg with David Upshall

CHANNEL 4 BOOKS PBK £9 99

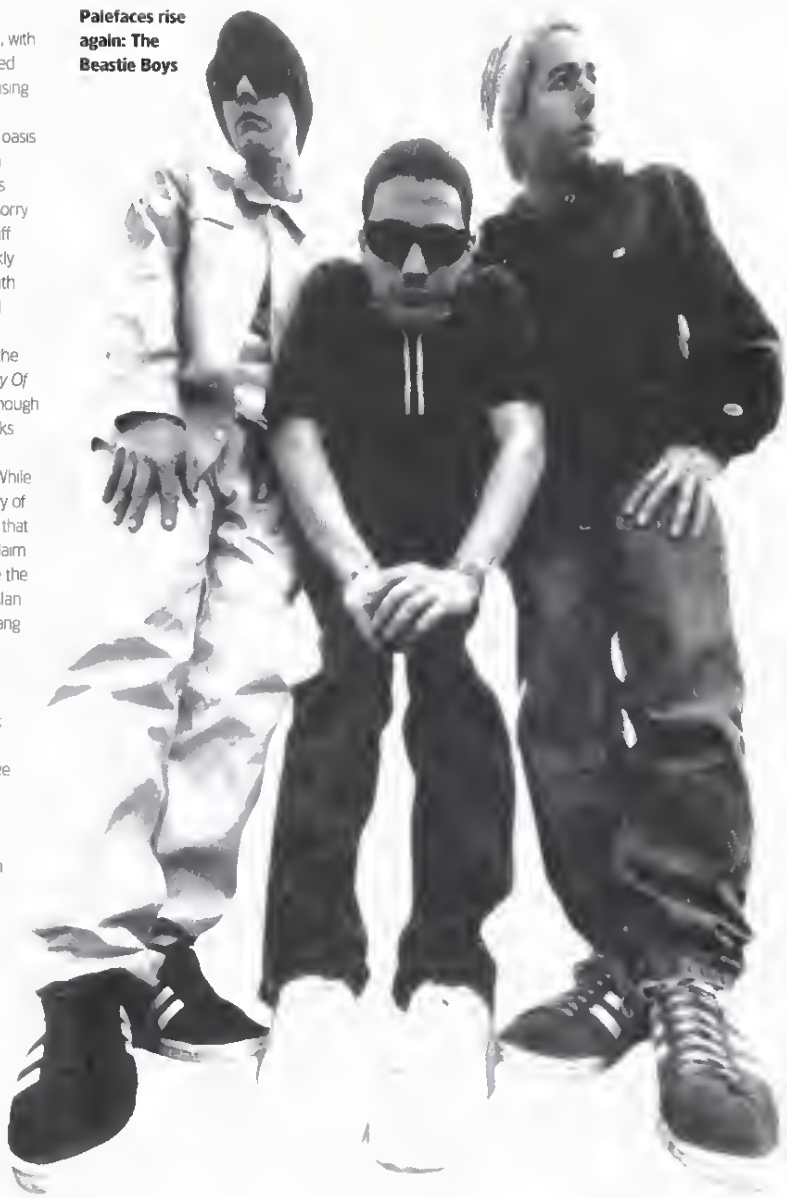
For a genre as concerned with the word as HipHop, it has inspired a surprising lack of decent books — how long ago did *Rap Attack* first appear? Of course the problem doesn t necessarily rest squarely on the shoulders of HipHop scribes — publishers and their upper class or racist beliefs that HipHop fans don't or can t read haven t helped matters any Slowly but surely though, things are coming around and soon enough there will be Barney Hoskyns-style biogs of Rakim and De La Soul and *Hammer Of The Gods*-style epics about Puff Daddy and Jay-Z In the meantime HipHop writers must ask themselves why, with very few exceptions, the music has inspired only hearsay histories overripe mythologising and apologetic academic prose

Though it started out as a mainstream oasis of intelligent writing on African American music, Quincy Jones's *Vibe* magazine has become one of the chief culprits of the sorry state of HipHop journalism Despite a staff filled with talented writers, *Vibe* has quickly become a *Rolling Stone* doppelganger with some of the dullest, most non-committal writing and the most sycophantic celeb-profiles to be encountered anywhere in the free world So how come *The Vibe History Of HipHop* is so eminently readable and, although it s not saying much, one of the best books available on HipHop?

The answer is in the book s approach While you can easily criticise a self-styled history of HipHop by complaining that it leaves out that 'crucial' Tuff Crew B-side, whatever the claim of this book's title, it doesn t purport to be the definitive HipHop text Indeed, as editor Alan Light acknowledges in his introduction Gang Starr EPMD and Kool Moe Dee get very short shrift here Instead *The Vibe History Of HipHop* succeeds very admirably in its aim to be HipHop's first coffee table book With its lavish production values and polished, well-presented writing, the coffee table was always its parent magazine s ultimate destination and the luxury book format is a match made in heaven It looks so fly I hated defacing my copy with notes in the margins

The Vibe History may be as pretty as Big Daddy Kane in full flight, but the aspirational approach has its problems Essays like "HipHop In The Movies" and "Great Aspirations HipHop And Fashion Dress For Excess And Success" serve no point other than to get the magazine's movie and fashion editors on board while the profile of Tupac Shakur feels like it was written with his publicist hovering over author Danyel Smith s shoulder These aside, the book represents the strengths of American journalism over its Limey cousins professionalism humour and, when it works making the personal universal Sasha Frere-Jones s autobiography of a young Run DMC fan is just about everything you could ask of music writing while Mike Rubin s too brief Catskills comedy routine on The Beastie Boys is both insightful and a non-stop laff riot (check out the latest issue of *Motorbooty* for his definitive history of paleface rappers) The book s main strength however is its demystification of regional phenomenons that get next to zero coverage over here Tony Green's essay on the 'Dirty South is simply superb while the coverage of the West Coast nicely balances out the New York-based media bias

That said, the multiplicity of voices reveals the book s real problem *The Vibe History* inevitably suffers from the stylistic difficulties you get when you call on the services of dozens of contributors John Szwed s dry and academic essay on HipHop's prehistory is painfully out of place in a book filled with storytelling journalism and people riding Greg Tate s jock With no knowledge of what the others have been up to, various writers feel the need to go over HipHop's origins themselves with numbingly repetitive results the Kool Herc sidebar repeats almost verbatim the information in SH Fernando s essay on rap's early days, 'Rapper s Delight" is invoked at least 15 times in the first few chapters and B-boy is defined in at least six separate places Following writing as electric as that of Rubin Frere-Jones and Green it s a real buzz-kill to read the Native Tongues essay which is as tedious as the last couple of albums by A Tribe Called Quest and Jungle Brothers For every mis-step however there



Palefaces rise again: The Beastie Boys

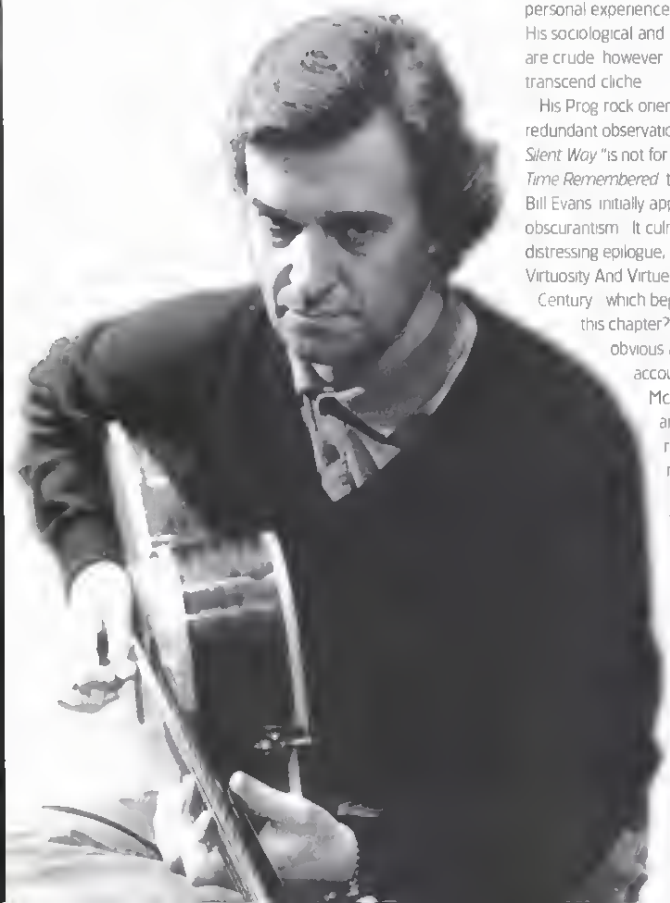
are at least as many great details like the bit about Chuck D modelling his voice on sportscaster Marv Albert (thank God he didn't grow up listening to Barry Davies)

If *The Vibe History* is the literary equivalent of KMD then *The HipHop Years* is Candyman if not Hammer In fact, the only thing preventing it from being Vanilla Ice is that like the accompanying Channel 4 TV series *The HipHop Years* has a couple of nice quotes from some of the genre's more obscure participants Entrepreneur Michael Holman tells a brilliant story about a troupe of breakdancers that he organised to perform at Ronald Reagan's inaugural ball upstaging Frank Sinatra Jr at the end of which the chairman of the board turned to him and said "Your career is over But such quotes are usually placed so out of context they are rendered useless Also just like the TV series the book seems to view the last decade or so of HipHop as nothing but a series of controversies about sex and violence

One way or another the book is as ignorant as a Dogg Pound rhyme Just a brief random sample "Breakbeats subsequently became the springboard for Detroit Techno" "Belafonte was asked to pay tribute to Catherine Deneuve, the choreographer *Flashdance* (an inferior candyfloss descendant of *Wild Style*)", the Brazilian dance form capoeira becomes the African martial arts form capoeta, etc, etc *The HipHop Years* plays fast and loose not just with the facts but with the English language

PHOTO OF JOHN MCLAUGHLIN NICK PROCAYLO

John McLaughlin: you writin' about *me*?



as well " its component elements registering an identity that was at once secular but interdependent" Huh? But hey what's a little inaccuracy and illegibility between friends when the publishers throw in a free four track CD for good measure?

PETER SHAPIRO

Go Ahead John: The Music Of John McLaughlin

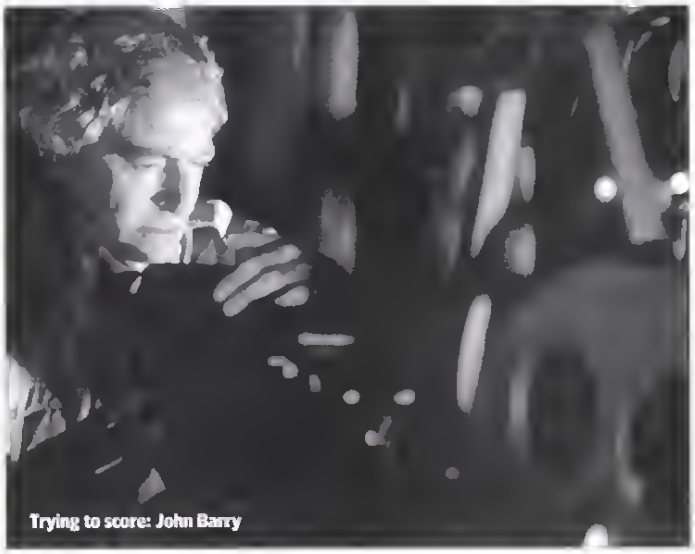
By Paul Stump

SAF PBK $1 99

The exhortatory title is lifted from a track on Miles Davis's album *Big Fun* but Paul Stump has written previously on early 70s Progressive rock and he approaches John McLaughlin via this route rather than from within a jazz perspective Though the impetus for the book was evidently laudatory McLaughlin emerges from under the accumulated weight of commentary and quotation as a brittle at times petulant personality seemingly incapable of sustaining longterm professional or personal relationships The guitarist's erstwhile guru Sri Chinmoy is presented as a spiritual charlatan with McLaughlin as his dupe More pertinently the considerable musical peaks of his career are separated by grim troughs, indicative of major lapses of creative judgement

In a gushing preface Stump is apologetic for his own lack of musicological grounding and acknowledges indebtedness to Stuart Nicholson's recent analytical history *Jazz Rock* The first half of this book especially, is excessively reliant upon Nicholson Stump is an enthusiast at his best when conveying personal experience of listening to records His sociological and historical observations are crude however and they rarely transcend cliche

His Prog rock orientation precipitates redundant observations Miles Davis's *In A Silent Way* "is not for McLaughlin fans per se", *Time Remembered* the guitarist's tribute to Bill Evans initially appeared a wilful piece of obscurantism It culminates in the book's distressing epilogue, subtitled "Musical Virtuosity And Virtue In The Late 20th Century which begins, "Why bother writing this chapter? Why indeed? The obvious answer is that Stump's account has diminished McLaughlin's stature to such an extent that he feels recuperative work is required Overlooking the reasons for McLaughlin's fall from favour amply delineated in the preceding account he presents him as a Progressive rock hero whose worth has been eroded by punk's apostasy from worship of the virtuoso The 1980s was for Stump a "musical nightmare



Trying to score: John Barry

wherein "technique was especially damned it was deemed exclusive and elitist (save for artists of some assumed political or social value usually black or female which for instance allowed Bootsy Collins or Larry Graham to solo as long and as freakishly as they wished on electric bass)" Prince's brilliant drummer Sheila Escovedo was allowed to indulge in lengthy solos, which were now forbidden to white men And so on

The rash provocation intensifies with Stump asking "Why is an hour-long Coltrane solo 'the real thing' and an Eddie Van Halen extemporization not so?" He argues that only an "ethnomusical defence' can find value in Archie Shepp's "interminable honks and squeals while finding none in Keith Emerson 'tearing his Hammond organ to bits or Carl Palmer playing a bell with his teeth" Stump's relativism which is soon qualified with a terse dismissal of facile pop barely conceals a desperate agenda to redeem "the white guys with the fast fingers"

Earlier, he accuses McLaughlin of staging "freakishly tasteless spectacles" Shifting the blame onto putative political radicalism or emotional fundamentalism is a cumbersome and ineffectual sleight of hand Van Halen and Emerson manifestly suffer from comparable lapses of judgement and proportion So indeed does Stump's own prose He encapsulates the arrival of Katia Labeque in McLaughlin's life as "the intervention of a well-turned, and very musicianly French ankle" More generally his writing is clumsily structured sometimes to the point of confusion and it is fraught with inconsistency and linguistic imprecision In the epilogue he proclaims his intention to "scotch romantic myths about playing from the heart or in the cause of some greater power — even though McLaughlin himself might deem it as deified Music " Yet Stump jarringly insists on using the word 'avatar' without irony to describe Miles Davis Wayne Shorter and Prince An avatar is, of course, an incarnation of the divine That example is indicative Stump argues that McLaughlin has been marginalised It is not clear what this actually entails What is the centre that determines his marginality? Financial success? Airplay? Popular acclaim? Captain Beefheart Prince Miles Davis and Duke Ellington are among the other figures he identifies as 'unhailed toilers in the crevices between musical genres" Stump is on much sounder ground when simply registering his own responses

JULIAN COWLEY

The Score: Interviews With Film Composers

By Michael Schelle

SILMAN JAMES PRESS PBK $19 95

According to Woody Allen, 'there's nothing better than music badly played by people who love it Composer Thomas Newman cites Allen approvingly in discussion with Michael Schelle and adds his own angle The minute you get professionals interpreting your ideas there's something highminded about it and something potentially disgusting " His mischievous humour recalls his cousin Randy however a sustained subtle iconoclasm marks Newman's interview technique, as if he is keen to prevent subordination of his own musical identity to his status as scion of a famous film music family headed by his father Alfred Newman

In the preceding interview Joel McNeely who scored *The Avengers* and *Virus* laments a current shift in the soundtrack away from orchestral scoring towards the sterility of cut-and-paste technology" Newman, on the other hand deplores the use of film music to justify "conservative musical natures" and welcomes departures from conventional interpretative gestures and ritualised expression This book has been carefully assembled to draw out such contrasts, and although the focus is strictly Hollywood the interviewees are strikingly various in their backgrounds views and practices

Schelle is himself a composer of concert music, as well as a genuine enthusiast for cinema His interlocutory presence threads the diverse conversations together and shapes them into a coherent discourse without appearing formulaic A palpable rapport emerges in every case, as he talks to Newman McNeely John Barry Elmer Bernstein, Terence Blanchard Bruce Broughton Paul Chihara John Corigliano James Newton Howard Mark Isham Daniel Licht Marc Shaiman Howard Shore Shirley Walker and Christopher Young

His familiarity with their work is impressive in itself but it is especially valuable as it enables him to ask highly specific technical questions, which reveal how film composers achieve dramatic effects There s plenty here for the musicologically literate, but the book's erudition poses no obstacle to readers with an interest in the more mundane practicalities of writing music with a director looking over your shoulder and critical deadlines looming Schelle responds sympathetically to the frustrations and aspirations of these highly paid but often artistically undervalued musicians His introductory contention that "some of the most original, effective influential and communicative new music in the past 50 years has come from Hollywood is clearly a polemical flourish but the book does convert it into a credible claim

Repeatedly connections are made between techniques of film composition and the vocabulary and syntax of the classical avant garde Daniel Licht, who scored Stephen King's *Thinner*, concurs with Schelle's suggestion that film composers have assumed the role of "the flagwaving frontline' introducing new orchestral music to large audiences albeit subliminally Most of his subjects agree that the kind of music kept out of American concert halls by conservative programming filters through indirectly by means of film soundtracks Christopher Young composer for *Hellraiser* tells of his excitement on discovering Stockhausen and Krzysztof Penderecki The Polish composer's use of clusters and unusual string effects are widely admired here Howard Shore notes similarities between Penderecki s music and 'action jazz" John Barry speaks of Penderecki and Donna Summer in the same breath, almost, James Newton Howard who once worked with Elton John declares himself a fan of Penderecki and Ligeti as well as Soundgarden and Pearl Jam This is a realm where wildly different soundworlds collide Paul Chihara composer of the estimable Tree Music concert series, enthuses over his work with folksy singing group The Roches, and then mentions his friendship with the late Toru Takemitsu

What links these film composers is their inexhaustible excitement when exploring possibilities of sound materials Elmer Bernstein still cherishes the thrill of hearing Jeanne Loriod playing the ondes martenot Howard Shore enthuses over Lydia Kavina s theremin playing Daniel Licht admits that he, like Bernard Herrmann is drawn to the permutations of instruments that might be viable in film work but not in concert performance thereby affording him the freedom to write a piece for eight trombones 12 harps and 16 horns without economic constraint

Such freedom compensates for other restrictions which often verge on the intolerable Time pressures are gruelling lack of control over say, the location of sound effects above the music is a source of evident irritation The precariousness of the job itself is made graphically clear in the course of the Shore interview He talks of playing with the rock group Lighthouse acting as musical director for *Saturday Night Live* collaborating with Ornette Coleman on *The Naked Lunch* and speaks appreciatively of Ron Howard s direction on the movie *Ransom* Schelle interrupts to note that Shore s music was axed from that project without explanation The composer accepted the decision with equanimity As other instances in the book make clear it's a familiar occupational hazard These composers are of necessity sanguine and tend to be modest with regard to their achievement accepting that with a few prominent exceptions film people are not invited to cross into the concert sphere One of the strengths of Schelle s book is how he manages to give due credit without appearing ingratiating He has done his homework with admirable thoroughness, and embeds his discussion of the music in close knowledge of individual films and mainstream cinema history

The Score contains no illustrations no bibliography or discography Individual biographies are limited to a brief survey of work accomplished This no-frills approach might have been a weakness had not Schelle put the volume together with such self-contained clarity and purposefulness An index would have been helpful, but otherwise its directness and lively informativeness offer a model for further ventures into the broader spectrum of film composition

JULIAN COWLEY

The Life And Music Of Nick Cave: An Illustrated Biography

By Maximilian Dax and Johannes Beck

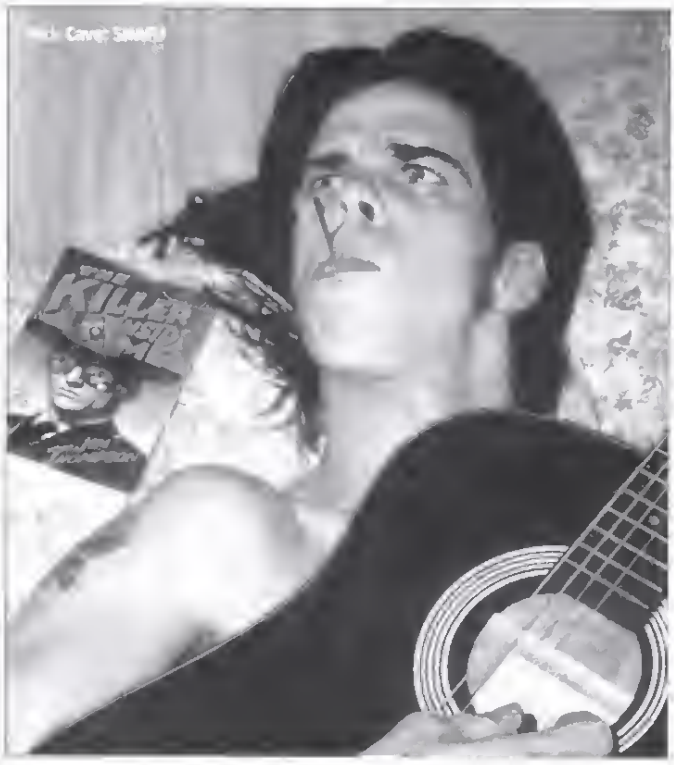
OIE GESTALTEN VERLAG PBK £21 99

That Nick Cave is not universally admired might hit the buyers of this lavishly illustrated full-colour foursquare fanbook like a forearm smash from his musclebound ex-Birthday Party colleague the late and sorely missed bassist Tracy Pew Presumably responding to the authors plea for character witnesses, one such nay sayer Arto Lindsay files the following affidavit "If you were doing a Kid Creole biography I could give you a much better quote — because August Darnell is the opposite of Nick Cave! But it's Anita Lane Cave s former lover, muse and partner-in-grime (and the mother of the son of this book s co-author Johannes Beck incidentally) who delivers the double whammy in the book's devastating one-line closing address "I wish I would have never met this man Coming from the woman who had inspired and/or contributed to some of The Birthday Party s most memorable moments and was later enshrined in Cave s monumental mausoleum song "From Her To Eternity', her kiss-off is quite some epitaph to engrave in a book that has kept — for admirable reasons of loyalty and discretion the too personal at arm s length in the preceding 175 pages

Going out on such a powerful, disarming quote, so prominently positioned needs unpacking, however Disgorging the contents of artist/designer Beck and writer Dax s bio-pic volume scatters a paper trail of clues as to the source of Lane's hurt and the depth of Cave's sorrow — respectively and vice versa — but they fall way short of presenting a watertight case for or against There's fascinating photo evidence aplenty of The Birthday Party s scorched earth trails in rock, beginning in Melbourne then onto London, Berlin and later the USA amid album snapshots like kid Cave in a cowboy suit his school portrait and touching pictures of him and Anita Pics of Cave together with Blixa Bargeld (displacing Cave and Rowland S Howard) signal the transition to The Bad Seeds Thereafter the trail leads to Hollywood Brazil right round the world back to London the route marked by concert footage, movie stills, group shots and family portraits, with Cave growing strangely younger and more innocent throughout It is as if he has been progressively exorcising his demons, his drugneed and his scorned lover fury in the black bilious and deadly funny splatter songs harrowing blues and loving laments of his albums with The Bad Seeds which now seem like stations on the way to the state of grace of his most recent release *The Boatman's Call*

What Dax's text shies away from the few drawings and collages pulled from Cave's scrapbook confront head-on in the way they picture girlish innocence petulantly or angrily gorged and gashed with misplaced female genitalia Either they have the jolting shock of a curseword in a Beckett plaintext, or they're the stuff of a psychoanalyst's dreams depending on your training But writer Dax isn't out to have a Freudian field day His (translated) text alternates between bluff journeyman reportage and glib, unsupported value judgements It is also pockmarked with silly errors Yet the flatness of the writing doesn't so much impede affairs as bring up the immediacy and accelerate the pace of this absorbing story

BIBA KOPF



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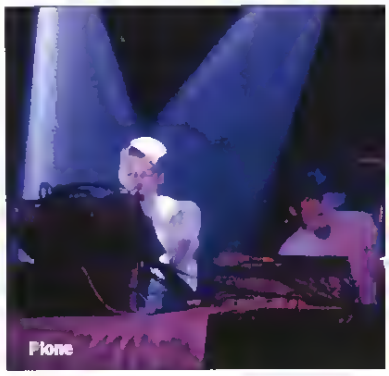
Red Snapper

Warp 10 Concerts
UK London Z Rooms

To celebrate ten years of (r)evolutionary electronica, these three concerts were perfectly programmed to illustrate how both Warp's remit and roster have expanded and diversified in recent times Over three nights the label presented a phalanx of its more commercially astute signings, an evening pervaded by retro sensibilities perfectly in tune with the current millennial stocktaking spirit and a shock of its bred-in-the-bone avant hard roster If nothing else the shows dispelled the notion that Warp can be defined by a single overriding aesthetic, and that high-end electronic music is a hard sell tickets were like gold dust

On the opening night, a Wednesday, I arrived in time to catch the tail end of Jimi Tenor's set, which went out on the scuzzy, stabbing riff of "Sugardaddy" A trombonist and baritone saxophonist blasted out dirty horn lines, while an elegant lady-in-red coaxed sounds from a contact miked fan (of the cooling, rather than adoring, variety) But Jimi s Hendrix-style instrument abuse fell short of outright immolation Favouring self-parody over pain he assaulted one of his cheaper synths with his nose before abandoned the keyboards to rattle around the stage like a demented Gerry Anderson puppet, cranking an outsize music box, miming to the sounds being generated by a



Plone

turntablist lurking in the shadows Fabulous!

Nightmares On Wax's set was slick and intermittently lugubrious At their best, with the divine vocals of Sarah Winton pouring a honeyed glaze all over the perfect pop of "Survival", the group displayed real panache But their male figurehead dealt in utter tedium, inflicting shallow, rambling ruminations and endless non sequitur references to *"the herbs"* on a hapless audience Under his influence the music meandered through a by-rote take on blunted beats (yawn) The shallow self-aggrandising peaked with the MC's parting shot *"We don t deal in faceless music"* Doh!

Red Snapper began their set as an instrumental quartet of drums, double bass,

WARP PHOTOS JOHNNY VOLCANO

guitar and keyboards, delivering some off-kilter funk as high-grade sustenance for the post-Acid Jazz generation. But then they were joined by two vocalists who came on like rap's very own Mr Motivator and Scary Spice auditioning for the part of Ophelia. The singers introduced a much lighter sensibility to the stage, as with NDW, there seemed to be two groups at work here, playing inspired musicianship off against commercial acuity.

Compared to the consummate professionals working the previous night, Plone, opening the second night, were remarkably warm and personable. Indeed, the synth trio's very awkwardness worked to their advantage, which meant that the set's several retuning and reprogramming pitstops were endearing rather than embarrassing. On record, the group's love songs for Zanussi technicians can sound painfully introverted, but live, they come across as a rich and sonorous take on electro-pop. The audience loved them, diffident Brummie accents and all.

Broadcast kicked off like The Velvet Underground ripping into a James Bond theme, with bowed guitar and sub-Sabbath bass building a considerable sound mass. This unexpected opening gambit wasn't entirely dissipated when the group settled down to a run-through of familiar material that spliced imaginary soundtracks with lyric narratives. The music might have been somewhat wanting in internal development, and the vocals might have lacked the necessary tensile edge to carry a performance, but at least Broadcast didn't wilt in the glare of the strobes. Their closing wall of sound salvo was

Nightmares On Wax

just the wrong (or right) side of painful, and had the singer plugging her ears. Looking around, she wasn't alone. Conspicuous ear plugging, preferably in primary colours, is now de rigueur at electronica events.

A DJ, possibly Scratch Daddy Addy, joined the Plaid duo of Ed Handley and Andy Turner for their set, which helped to inject the pre-programmed material with some sense of spontaneity. Musically speaking, Plaid might be the shrinking violets of the Warp stable, but they know what it takes to move a crowd. Their set bypassed the kind of airy nuances and deft touches that distinguish their records to access a strain of hard-edged Techno that rocked oodies and heads alike.

And so to the potentially austere delights of the closing night. With their adoption of Richard James-style beards, Boards Of Canada's passable imitation of The Aphex Twin was reinforced by the similarity of their opening number to the latter's Philip Glass collaboration "Donkey Rhubarb". The bulk of their set echoed Plone's triumph of human frailty over machine precision, accompanying the music with meditative video images of children, birds, the aurora borealis, and seascapes at sunset. BOC music is slowburning psychotropia. Their rhythms needed time to take root in the consciousness before the accretion of detail completed a fully immersive experience. The songs unspooled in accordance with audiences' biorhythms, all arterial heat and pulse.

Although Autechre are to electronica what Conlon Nancarrow was to the piano roll, producing mechanical music that defies easy analysis, they have found ways to make the live experience of it utterly corporeal. Illuminated only by the winking lights on their hardware, the crisp complexity and precision slippage of their recordings took on an extra visceral aspect, with their boggling arsenal of extreme frequencies aimed directly at sundry portions of the audience's anatomy. Any lingering doubts that machine-generated music can't match the transcendent ecstatic principle currently animating strands of free music were swept away tonight.

After an interminable wait, Squarepusher finally took the stage to a barrage of strobes, flanked by dancers, and pumping out a sequence of short, acidic nu-fusion bunfights.

Jimi Tenor

Heard in isolation, Squarepusher's polyrhythmic evisceration of the last 20 years of jazz funk excess can still raise the hairs on the back of the neck. But in this context, and especially on the heels of Autechre's rigorous frequency modulation, his Wacko Jaco routines just sounded wack.

So the job was done. Ten years down the line, these concerts proved that Warp is in rare health. Not only has the label managed to expand its brief with no glaring lapses of judgement or quality in its signings, it has also helped promote what is arguably the only significant transfer of an essentially studiobound music to the live arena.

TIM OWEN

Laurie Anderson sings *Moby Dick*

PHOTO OF LAURIE ANDERSON FRANK MICELOTTA

Laurie Anderson: *Songs And Stories From Moby Dick*

USA, Brooklyn Academy of Music

Herman Melville's *Moby Dick* is the looming American novel, an epic adventure of obsessive search, an encyclopedic meditation on humankind adrift in the cosmic ocean daring to buck the waves. There is too much intellectual effort, metaphoric layering and signifying detail in the huge book to endure in any medium except its original form — which its author despaired was "a draft of a draft of a draft" — though John Huston effectively dramatised some scenes in his Hollywood film version, with Gregory Peck portraying Captain Ahab like Abe Lincoln gone mad. For Laurie Anderson, the darling of Manhattan's digerati, to take on the tome seems like an act of hubris comparable to Ahab's quest to nail the great white whale itself. How dare she pin minimalist theatrics, nouveau rock operatics and PoMo cut-ups to this literary heavyweight without reducing it to a Classic Comix?

Anderson dares by treating her subject absolutely seriously, knowing it inside and out, and delving for its core while giving no quarter to archness, coyness, glib irony or defensive cool. In the course of a now lengthy and unique music theatre career, she has developed a superior sense of episode and totality, pseudo-simplicity and wry style, and at the New York premiere of *Songs And Stories* her mastery reigned over 90 spellbinding minutes, masquerading as a slight, subtly emphatic storyteller, a singer, instrumental soloist, sleight-of-hand show-woman and sight and sound designer.

She served, variously, as a late 20th century reader of the novel, as an old salt asserting that the book's real subject is "big heads", and as Pip, the cabin boy who is strung from the whaling ship's stern for long dunks in the sea. She sang the most affecting airs I've heard from her, actually aimed at evoking yearnings of the spirit and heart. She has also generously assigned prominent features to Anthony Turner and Tom Nelis (dancing on crutches, bearded, under a towering stovepipe hat) among her small yet effective cast.

Electric bassist Skoli Svernisson provided a relentless undertow that simultaneously anchored and swept the production. Dressed darkly, he stood mostly to the side, while Anderson kept Melville's grasping metaphysics, Ahab's tragic ego, outpourings of language and comparisons of scale in centre sight. Musically her focus was on ambience — whale bleeps, gull cries, crashing waves and pre-recorded soundtracks by a phantom band (percussionist Joey Baron, accordionist Charlie Giordano) — as a setting for surreal dances, her sometimes

processed vocalising her deployment of a harpoon-shaped digital 'talking stick' and resonant electric fiddle But this was equally a visual show, with hi-resolution video and dramatic projections, phantasmagoric lighting and a few provocative props casting the audience into a common dream

The dreamer of course, is Anderson herself, and some of the original *Moby Dick* was fudged in her selected anecdotes and themes Well we'd come to see *her* show after all, and we were not disappointed Though *Songs And Stones* paralleled the book s structure Anderson's version was considerably more intimate and abstract than conventional music theatre yet busier than a Robert Wilson production, and more active than a Robert Ashley opera Tolling bells and countless depictions of water, light patterns simulating an aquarium's tiles, faces of actors and singers blown up enormously, distorted or in silhouette, an alternately under- and then over-sized armchair conjured a domain that was otherworldly but not unfamiliar Anderson s angles re-engaged us in a 150 year old novel that most educated Americans encountered in secondary school — and then forgot

Unlike much of Anderson s other, more self-referential work, *Songs And Stones From Moby Dick* stirred up long dormant thoughts and even emotions within the audience (or within me, anyway) She succeeded most of all in renewing the sense of wonder we hope to gain from theatre music fiction and visual art as lenses on matters of overwhelming scale Like, who are we, little fish for all our pretensions casting about within an infinity we can t ever contain describe or really imagine? And when we go looking for the power above all, is there ever a hope of shrinking our target to size?

HOWARD MANDEL

PHOTO STUART MOSTOFSKY

Lisle Ellis

Fire In The Valley

USA Amherst Unitarian Meeting House

That the fourth annual Fire In The Valley festival had to be transported from the campus of the University of Massachusetts, where it was held last year, to the cosy sanctuary of the Amherst Unitarian Meeting House turned out to be more than a little symbolic Since the majority of its participants aspire to reach the cosmos and beyond with their own version of a non-denominational yet specified doctrine, the aesthetically pleasing if less accommodating venue was well suited to the ambitions of its organisers the Conway New Music Society and the Eremite label s Michael Ehlers Meanwhile the House s religious imagery and stained glass windows afforded an engaging backdrop to the activities on the stage below

The festival commenced slightly behind schedule with a set by alto saxophonist Marco Eneidi's San Francisco Bay Area trio Their music quickly compensated for the delay Bassist Lisle Ellis has been working with drummer Donald Robinson since relocating from Vancouver in the early 90s The symmetry between the two was nothing short of kinetic as they quickly established a buoyant groove After leaving them to bring their simmering brew to a rise, Eneidi rushed into the flowing exchange with some hell-bent flourishes and scalar runs Though the trio bears Eneidi s name, this music is very much about open communication, with each player switching from lead voice to counterpoint or accompanist to shore up whoever has decided to run with it While Eneidi was an absolute terror blazing rambunctiously atop the waves of sound, his sallies would not have been possible were it not for Ellis's vigorous pizzicato and Robinson s incessant, yet economical brushwork

New York's hardest working underground quartet Test rode in on the momentum of two new recordings — *Live Test* on Eremite and *Test* on Ecstatic Peace Bearing an uncanny resemblance to any number of movie characters played by Tom Waits drummer Tom Bruno started each piece with a loose, open rhythm, eventually set in motion with the arrival of Matthew Heyner's equally expansive bass Once they d got a loquacious dialogue going they would be joined by the multi-instrumental frontline of Daniel Carter and Sabir Mateen, converging on the rhythm with their armoury of saxophones, flutes, clarinets and a trumpet The pair eased into the music's motion weaving between and betwixt each other until a burning helix of split tones and gruff screams hitting fever pitch transformed the dialogue into a whirling dervish of a discourse

Of the four acts present, the one that most fully exploited the venue's ambience was the duo of Oakland-based reed legend Oluyemi Thomas and Alan Silva, one of the founding fathers of New York style ecstatic jazz (or energy music, call it what you will) Their performance opened as the last rays of the setting sun streamed through the multi-coloured windows, and wound down in complete darkness The music itself was no less awe-inspiring than the light show laid on by the heavens Though Silva rarely plays the bass publicly these days you wouldn t know it from this set He manipulated and bent the instrument's tones to suit his every need with no apparent difficulty Though heard infrequently outside of California Thomas is one of North America s preeminent bass clarinettists, and he's equally potent on other reeds While Silva carried out deft, rough-hewed arco manoeuvres across the canvas Thomas filled the spaces between with gurgling, deep-ended explorations or else chased the bassist into the nether regions firing off fragmented spins and molten interjections along the way Assaulting several different senses at once their set epitomised the idea of creating order out of chaos

The group which guitarist Joe Morris brought to Amherst was the same one that recorded the recent *Many Rings* album on Knitting Factory Works Given Morris's pathological resolve to constantly challenge himself it was no surprise to discover that the guitarist had already instigated a shift in the group's music by the time it got to Amherst Playing with the anomalous but perversely symbiotic line-up of alto saxophonist Rob Brown, accordionist and sampler Andrea Parkins and bassoonist Karen Borca Morris s own fretboard pyrotechnics sounded unlike anything he'd previously recorded Spending a considerable portion of the performance in the guitar's lower register, Morris spun out mercurial lines and liquid rushes around Parkins's herky-jerky accordion while Brown and Borca kept the core of the music churning over with a volley of spiralling solos Under the wrong leader a line-up like this would be a novelty act with Morris at the helm, the music sounded completely refreshing, if not downright visionary

The intergalactic trio of Silva bassist William Parker and altoist Marshall Allen closed the night Silva s current instrument of choice is a synthesizer sounding closer to the oscillators of The Silver Apples than a conventional keyboard He used it to drop strange depth charge noises as William Parker deployed his multigrained bowing and fingering to detonate open-stringed bombs, while Allen's alto lunged into the stratosphere Now in his mid-seventies Allen the musical director of The Sun Ra Arkestra (see below) shows no signs of mellowing The altoist s jagged phrases and biting forays into the upper registers still pack more force than players half his age If Silva's lo-fi electronics posed a slight technical limitation the trio's set successfully conjured the cosmic energy of Allen's former leader while simultaneously forging a sound of their own

JON C MORGAN

Rafael Toral

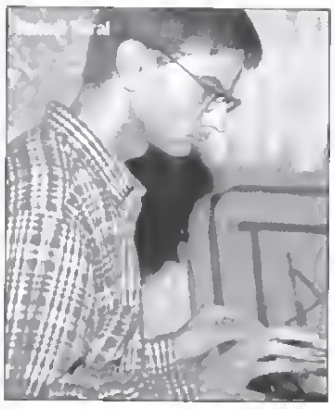
USA Chicago Lunar Cabaret/The Empty Bottle

Guitarist, engineer and sound artist Rafael Toral of Lisbon, Portugal evidently feels at home in the Windy City The forthcoming reissue of his debut album *Sound Mind Sound Body* on Jim O'Rourke's Moikai label will be his third release on a Chicago label More pertinently, his subtle ghosts-in-the-machine aesthetic has a quality of reverence and humility that fits beautifully, if oddly, into the hidden corners of this industrial city On his first visit here in three years, he emphasised two aspects of his work in two strikingly different settings

The first night was a presentation of his videos at the Lunar Cabaret a cafe and performance space operated by a local fringe theatre group at the Empty Bottle The group members' young children darted round the tiny, dark blue room, lending a strangely restless festive atmosphere to the proceedings Toral had set up his battery of electronics in a corner of the stage just behind and under the screen The first piece, *Flyability* consisted largely of long, lingering shots of incoming planes Toral sitting almost motionless, augmented the film's recorded soundtrack as unobtrusively as possible his presence adding a third dimension to the flow of blips and bleeps The grainy, static planes took on a primordial grace as the sky rolled by behind them The second video, *Air Pass* featured a field of giant windmills filmed from a moving car their great blades turning on high white columns against a deep green sky (a still from the film is featured on the cover of Toral's most recent album *Aenola Frequency*) As the camera moved, the massive propellors turned to the sound of Toral's eerie sinewave whistling When the video shifted to stop motion, and then to a long shot, the windmills looked like a giant alien forest of technological trees perched on animalistic, hairy-backed hills The third film, *Glider* was the most abstract of

the series a roadside flying by at high speed and backed by a warm drone on the soundtrack fragmented by Toral s high-pitched live guitar strumming On screen, the fluttering stripes in earthy greens and browns and yellows were downright trance-inducing, like a flat Dreamachine (which according to legend was inspired by Brion Gysin's experience of hallucinations brought on by the flicker of sunlight seen through trees as he rode in a car)

The second night was a more conventional music performance at the Empty Bottle, where Toral again displayed a little discomfort at the audience's tendency to focus on the performer His first piece, "Infinity Blur", began so delicately and unobtrusively that it took the bar crowd a good ten minutes to realise he d begun The dull roar of conversation can be problematic at the Bottle, but Toral met the challenge head on in possibly the most effective way by using silence and wilful submissions to ambient noise to quell the murmur This created a sort of backlash



effect his faint, extremely subtle constructions of pulses and steady tones like hospital monitors set to measure the life of the room — resulted in one of the quietest crowds I've seen at the club On occasion Toral took charge with a deep subsonic hum or a piercing steady sweep out of which a subtle taste of a foreshadowing ascent emerged slowly with poppings and scrapings and looped metallic trills But the piece ended much the way it came in with Toral in an almost private space with only a lingering electronic dove-coo to mark the almost-silence The work of straining the ear to pick up his sounds on the edge of audibility paid off as they revealed teasing glimpses of a fragile beautiful soundworld His second piece an improvisation with guitar and Marshall pocket amp wired up to loop the echoing tones coming from the drumming of his fingers on the side of his guitar plunged into nearly brutal volume His warped rolls of distortion loops had a gleeful sort of violence that made for a hell of a payoff Not only was it viscerally rousing it was also much easier listening, oddly enough, if not quite so rich and affecting as the first piece They say it s the quiet ones you have to watch out for

MONICA KENDRICK

The Arkestra go Dutch

The Sun Ra Arkestra

Netherlands The Hague Space Music Festival

Presented in association with Dutch experimental unit LOOS and organised by the group's leader Peter Van Bergen, the Space Music Festival brought together performers installations and events from across the universe Alongside new work by composers Huib Emmer and Martijn Padding The Hague's Korzo Theatre also hosted an interstellar fashion show, a devasting exchange of pulverised digital sound data between electronic percussionist Ikue Mori and old skool Fluxus activist Yasunao Tone plus assorted live Webcam transmissions DJ interventions and giant screen computer animation sequences The highpoint however was a rare European appearance by The Sun Ra Arkestra on a lightning four date tour of the Netherlands

Founded in 1954, The Arkestra has shown a dogged resilience despite losing several of its most valued players Sun Ra himself exited the planet back in 1993 and was soon followed by tenor saxophonist John Gilmore and singer June Tyson Now under the direction of altoist and longstanding core member Marshall Allen the 14 piece ensemble maintains a stately and dignified presence on stage even as some of the more flamboyant ghosts of its past come crowding in Fronted by four saxophonists with doubled trumpets and trombones in the second row, the rest of The Arkestra s sound is made up of a durable, workmanlike assemblage of guitar, string bass, drums and assorted percussion It needs those qualities, considering the weight of absence it has to bear

In deference to the whirling galaxies of synthesized noise which Sun Ra was capable of producing during a performance, keyboards and live electronics are no longer featured in any form Even Bruce Edwards s electric guitar is plugged straight into the amp without any intervening FX pedals Aided by a metal megaphone vocalist Art Jenkins still produces the strange roaring phonetics he conjured for the *Strange Strings* session but the pursuit of sonic extremes has now been replaced by the fractured bebop and loopy big band swing of The Arkestra s early years

Charles Davis from Sun Ra s Chicago period, conjures up some perfectly balanced baritone lines especially on a suitably atonal arrangement of the old supper club standard, "East Of The Sun while Junie Booth's upright bass keeps unswerving time with Luqman Ali's drums However Marshall Allen s exuberant alto playing is The Arkestra's sharpest edge Now 74 Allen wanders among the other players conducting with a few deft hand signals adjusting mic stands dancing an elegant shuffling watusi with Art Jenkins His concluding solo, on ebony flute over what sounds like a protracted version of Aethopea" is a masterpiece of strength and control With the rest of The Arkestra departing in a procession for the wings while performing a spirited "Space Is The Place" Allen sticks around just long enough to sing "We Travel The Spaceways" before making his own exit A few last joyful peals from his alto, and he s gone You can t help but wonder if he ll ever pass this way again

KEN HOLLINGS

AMM

UK London The Warehouse

The Warehouse has remained a closely guarded secret to all but hardened New Music audiences since the British Music Information Centre (BMIC) converted the space into a top drawer acoustic chamber Thankfully however the London Musicians Collective has gained entry in order to present a long day of free improvisations by the legendary open music trio AMM It s quite a weekend for improv in London in fact the following night AMM guitarist Keith Rowe joins a particularly tactile set of noxious frottage alongside Japanese freebies Otomo Yoshihide and Taku Sugimoto — a successful triad that clogged the air with amplified scribblings and scanned shortwaves

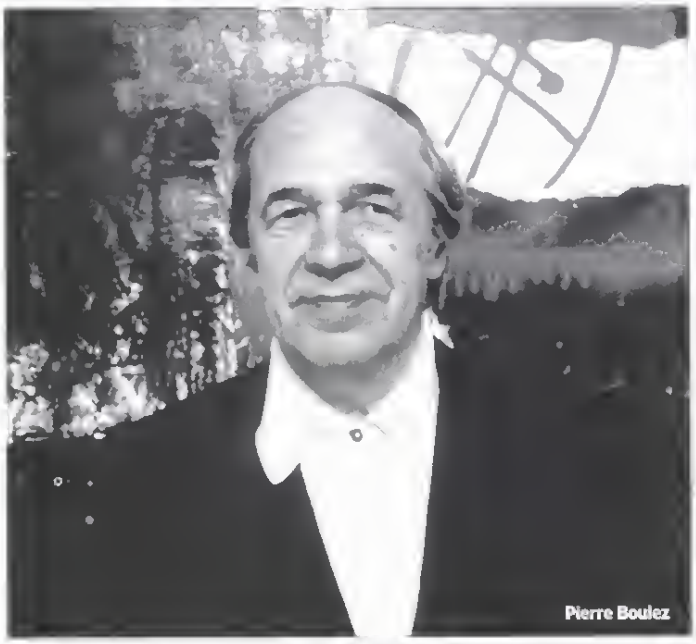
Rowe Eddie Prevost and John Tilbury are deployed widely along the broadest wall of the building – the set-up looks as though we've stepped back into a room in the Royal College of Art sometime in the mid-70s And that's the consistent fascination of an AMM gig — arrive expecting development new tricks since you last saw them and you'll most likely leave extremely disappointed AMM, hardy perennials, progress like crop growth they plough through cycles of waxing and waning and generally reap what they sow (inherent at any AMM gig is a market stall for their many recordings, plus Prevost s book on improvisation) The second of two shows felt like the cooling slowed effect of winter Eddie spends much of the set concentrating on his enormous barrel drum instead of fomenting heat on the drum-kit probing the tub s resonance with the aid of a bass string stretched across the skin Tilbury is a harmonious blacksmith chiselling in flattened note clusters to chime or counterpoint the inadvertent 'keys produced by Rowe's complex tone/drone manoeuvres The best moment is the conclusion everything decelerates, Rowe noisily switches equipment off and clips plectrums together There's a charged minute in which nobody in the room wants to make a sound nor wants the noise to stop nor wants to go on any more without a drink Applause precipitates as a relieving drizzle and someone near me bursts into tears as the weather front lifts It s familiar AMM we've never heard anything like it

ROB YOUNG

PHOTOS RAFAEL TORAL JIM NEWBERRY ARKESTRA HUIB EMMER

out there

December and January's selected festivals, live events, clubs and broadcasts


Pierre Boulez

UK Festivals

Boulez 2000

Celebrating the [illegible] 75th birthday The London Symphony Orchestra under the direction of Boulez will embark on an 11 city world tour throughout the year Each concert will feature specially commissioned works by composers like Olga Neuwirth Salvatore Sciarrino Peter Eotvos and George Benjamin alongside established 20th century masterpieces The festival will kick off in London with a Boulez Discovery Week which includes concerts talks interviews and a conducting masterclass London Barbican 26 January–2 March times/prices vary 020 7638 8891 Web *www.lso.co.uk*

Only Connect

Continuing the Barbican's series of cross-media pollination Michael Nyman will premiere *The Commissar Vanishes* his new work with photographer David King and video artist Christopher Kondek that examines Stalin's revision of photography and art (2 December) Diamanda Galas explores exile in *Defixiones Will And Testament* (9) and Louis Andriessen will score a Peter Greenaway film and work with designer Peter Saville and photographer Nick Knight (10) London Barbican 2–10 December times/prices vary 020 7638 8891

PLG Young Artists Concerts

Taking over the Purcell Room for a week this short series of concerts will showcase Britain's best and brightest new classical musicians The varied programme includes works by Takemitsu Ligeti Gubaidulina Kurtag and featured composer Colin Matthews In addition there will be the concommitant Young Composer's New Year Symposium in the foyer of Queen Elizabeth Hall London Purcell Room 10–15 January 6pm/7 30 pm 020 7960 4242

International Festivals

Experimental Intermedia Tenth Annual Festival

Proud of the fact that they have no fancy name, Phill Niblock's XI organisation hosts this two week festival in a New York loft Artists include Sam Ashley and Jens Brand Shelley Hirsch Hans Breder Judy Dunaway and Dan Evans Farkas *Haiana* magazine's Chris Rice and Ian Nagoski Marek Choloniewski, Krzysztof Knittel and Wlodzimierz Kiniorski Lou Malozzi John Maguire and the event culminates with a six hour set from Niblock himself In addition XI host a three day Intermedia Manifest(ation) in Iowa City immediately beforehand with Sam Ashley Shelley Hirsch and Hans Breder between 2–4 December at Iowa University Festival concerts USA New York 224 Centre Street at Grand 8–21 December, info 001 212 431 5127

Fin De Siècle À Nantes

The French city says farewell to the 20th century with three days of avant garde music dance and art Among the participating musicians are Caspar Brotzmann Peter Brotzmann Mats Gustafsson Kaffe Matthews Evan Parker and Keith Rowe, Pita Robin Rimbaud and Staalplaat Sound System 30 December–1 January various locations booking 00 33 2 40 12 14 34 Web *www.lelieuunique.com*

Logique HipHop Festival

Presented by Marseille's new National Centre for the Development of Modern Music this French festival celebrates HipHop's contribution to both global and local culture Stirring up the B-boy bouillabaise will be DJ Vadim The Arsonists and DJ Sky (18 December) Berlin's DJ Hype DJ Majestix and Karaka N (19) and Prime Cuts, DJ Djel and Daara (20) France Marseille La Friche La Belle de Mai 18–20 December 00 33 1 42 59 59 20 e-mail *ramade@club-internet.fr*

Rhizome Test

Subtitled A Re-View Of Cork Music, this five day festival will show that there's more to Irish music than U2 and Boyzone Featured performers include High Llamas Sean O Hagan and Kev Hopper Jad Fair and Kramer, Giordai O Laoighaire and Danny McCarthy Ireland Cork Triskel Arts Centre 1–5 December 00 353 21 272 022

Sonic Acts 1999

The sixth edition of this Dutch festival will explore electronic music's alliances with installations, video art and architecture As well as performances from the likes of Rehberg & Bauer Christian Fennesz Amon Tobin Kohn and Darryl Moore from Soul Static Sound the festival will include tours around town taking in installations and presentations linked to the composer Monteverdi The tours will be both on foot and on boat and will include food Netherlands Amsterdam Paradiso 21–23 December 00 31 20 626 4521 e-mail *janhid@paradiso.nl*

Sound Art: Sound As Media, The Pleasure Of Sound

Tokyo's high-tech ICC Centre hosts this exhibition/concert series focusing on the phenomena of sound Along with the ususal exhibit spaces, works by Max Eastley & David Toop Ryoji Ikeda, Carsten Nicolai, Marc Behrens Jio Shimuzu Jane Dowe and Brandon LaBelle will be presented in an anechoic room There will also be a concert/symposium on post-music featuring Terre Thaemlitz Ikue Mori Ryoji Ikeda Philip Jeck Christophe Charles and Disinformation (17–20 February) Japan Tokyo NTT ICC Centre, 28 January–12 March, 10am–6pm 00 81 3 5353 0800 Web *www.ntticc.or.jp*

Sound In Motion

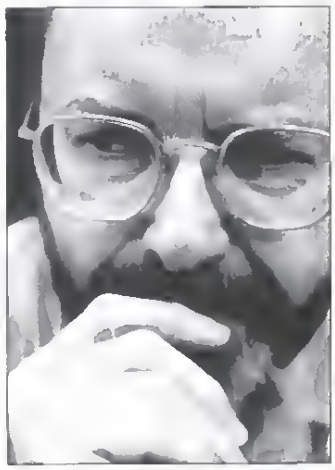
Working under the banner of Sonic Pictures For The Ear this Belgian festival explores the links between sound and vision with real-time manipulation of sound and images by Nicolas Collins and Kato Hideki (4 December) and a Fat Cat night curated by Diddy Dave Howell (18) Belgium Hasselt Kunstcentrum, 4–18 December info 00 32 11 22 41 61

Trans Musicales

The 21st annual edition of the multifarious French festival will include performances from the likes of Public Enemy The Arsonists, Tony Allen The Beat Junkies Jungle Brothers Super_Collider Quannum Freddy Fresh Macy Gray Blink 182 Jadell, Space Raiders, Luke Vibert & BJ Cole Badly Drawn Boy Yoshinori Sunahara Genesis P-Orridge Bill Laswell and Los Chicharrons France Rennes various venues/times/prices 2–4 December 00 33 2 99 31 12 10 Web *www.transmusicales.com*

20' To 2000

Up against Europe's "Final Countdown" as the inevitable choice to ring in the new millennium the excellent Raster-Noton label



will present an evening of live performances of the material on their 20 To 2000 series two weeks early. Contributors to the series including Ryoji Ikeda, Scanner, Mika Vainio, Thomas Brinkmann, Noto, Komet, Senking, Beytone, Wolfgang Voigt and ELpH (to be confirmed). Germany Berlin Volksbuhne, 14 December, 9pm-1am, info e-mail *office@raster-noton.de* Web *raster-noton.de*

Special Events

Speak Listen
A new site specific ins[illegible] DRONEsemble member [illegible] Newnham. Teasing out [illegible] contradictions of the gallery space, Newnham will exploit the lack of sound absorption surfaces in a place where one is meant to be as quiet as a church mouse. London Conductors Hallway, 3-19 December, 12-6pm, info 020 7403 3941

My Nose Is Killing Me
An all-night dance extravaganza put on by Save The Rhino International to raise awareness and funds for the campaign to preserve the world's declining rhinoceros population. Among those putting the horn back into dance music will be Coldcut performing a "freeform Pirate TV jam session", The Orb's Alex Paterson, J Swinscoe & The Cinematic Orchestra, Hexstatic, Adam Freeland, Beber, BLIM, Renegade Soundwave's Danny Briottet, Salina Saliva and Dreadzone. London Drome, 10 December, 10pm-6am, £12/£15, booking 020 7357 7474, Web *www.savetherhino.com*

On Stage

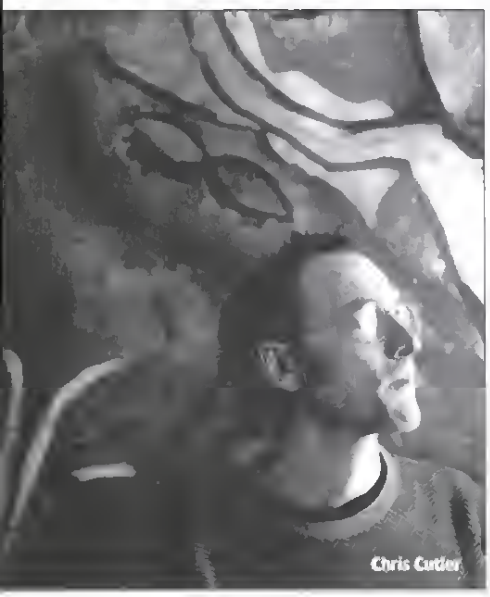
Julian Arguelles Octet One [illegible] from the saxophonist's group featuring [illegible] Bates, Mark Brassey, Steve Watts a[illegible] Laginha. Bath Michael Tippett Centre, [illegible] January, 7.30pm, £8, 01225 826431
Bark Improv trio featuring Phillip Marks, Rex Caswell and Paul Obermayer. Sheffield The Grapes, 10 December, 8.30pm, £4/£2
Clack Multimedia extravaganza featuring Lol Coxhill and Michael Kosmides on theremin and an electronic sampling glove. London Red Rose Club, 16 January, 8pm, £4/£3, 020 7263 7265
Basement Jaxx London Garage stars reschedule their postponed London show with guests Jazzie B and Paul Richards. London Forum, 1 December, 7pm, £12.50, 020 7344 0044
DRONEsemble All-encompassing listening experience featuring the group's custom-made rotary Leslie speaker cabinet. London Catherine Grove Studios, 22-23 January, 8pm, £5, 020 7403 3941
Ellery Eskelin Trio Challenging downtown jazz from a three piece featuring Andrea Parkins on accordian and Jim Black on drums. Birmingham Custard Factory, 4 December, 8pm, £8/£5, 0121 604 7777
John Etheridge & The Zappatistas British jazz guitarist and group honour the achievements of Frank Zappa. Manchester Band On The Wall (2 December), Birmingham Mac (10)
Fatback Band Funk institution and holders of the first HipHop record title do the Wicky Wacky. Manchester Band On The Wall, 14 December, 7.30pm, £15, 0161 832 6625
Ganger Glasgow post-rockers play live in a record shop. London Rough Trade Shop (Covent Garden branch), 4 December, 1.00pm, free, 020 7240 0105
Nicolas Hodges Solo recital of some of Michael Finissy's piano oeuvre. London Warehouse, 2 December, £8/£5, 020 7499 8567
Ryoji Ikeda + :zoviet*france: The titans of extreme electronic minimalism go head to head on a CMN-sponsored UK tour. London Queen Elizabeth Hall (18 January), Manchester Contact Theatre (20), Kendal Brewery Arts Centre (22), Bristol Arnolfini (27), Brighton Gardner Arts Centre (29)
Ken Ishii Japanese Techno whiz flies in or the back of his new album. Support provided by the duo of Luke Vibert and BJ Cole, and DJs Freq Nasty and Dark Globe. London Scala, 6 December, 8pm-2am, £8, 020 7344 0044
Lazycame The Jesus & Mary Chain's William Reid plays solo among the rack browsers. London Rough Trade Shop (Covent Garden branch), 11 December, noon, free, 020 7240 0105
Muzikas & Marta Sebestyen Hungary's progressive folk troubadours reach the capitol. London Blackheath Halls, 3 December, £16, 020 8463 0100
Van Dyke Parks California's visionary arranger and former Brian Wilson collaborator plays a one off with The High Llamas in support. London Queen Elizabeth Hall, 15 December, info 020 7960 4242
Iggy Pop Rock 'n' roll's longest serving passenger comes to London for two nights. London Shepherd's Bush Empire, 3-4 December, £17.50, 020 7771 2000
Ryuichi Sakamoto The former YMO member launches his European tour in London with a performance that will take in solo piano, guest musicians and a DJ set from the man himself. London Royal Festival Hall, 30 January, 7.30pm, £27.50-£10, 020 7960 4242
Nitin Sawhney Outcaste's Indo-fusioneer takes it to the big stage. London Shepherds Bush Empire, 12 December, £12.50, 020 7771 2000
John Surman/Karin Krog The multi-instrumentalist and vocalist renew their 30 year old collaboration. London Purcell Room, 9 December, 7.30pm, £12.50, 020 7960 4242
Sweep The Leg Johnny Southern's latest experimental indie kids on a short UK tour. Brighton Core Club (3 December), London venue tba (4), Newcastle Tut 'N' Shive (5), Glasgow Nice And Sleazy (6), Nottingham Old Angel (7), Leeds Fenton (8)
The Third Eye Foundation Matt Elliott leaves his pistol in Bristol and brings his high-octane samplescapes to the capital. London Borderline, 1 December, 8pm, £6, 020 7287 1441. Third Eye also join in a triple bill with Midlands groups Billy Mahonie and Magnetophone. Birmingham Flapper & Firkin, 8 December, 8pm, £5, 01922 406183
Violent Femmes Milwaukee's best are still at it. London Forum, 30 November, 7pm, £14.50, 020 7344 0044
Kenny Wheeler Three concerts celebrating the jazzman's 70th birthday with Dave Holland, Billy Hart, John Abercrombie, John Taylor and The Creative Jazz Orchestra. Manchester Royal Northern College Of Music (12 January), Birmingham Adrian Boult Hall (13), London Queen Elizabeth Hall (14)
Yo La Tengo New York/New Jersey [illegible] rock sweethearts bring the noise. Lon[illegible] Queen Elizabeth Hall, 4 December, 7.45[illegible] £12.50/£10.50, 020 7960 4242
John Zorn The king of downtown New York brings his groups Masada, Masada String Trio and Bar Kokhba to the UK for an extremely rare appearance. Featured musicians include Cyro Baptista, Joey Baron, Greg Cohen, Dave Douglas, Erik Friedlander and Marc Ribot. London Barbican, 26 January, 7.30pm, £8.50-£17.50, 020 7638 8891

Club Spaces

20 Century Wind Up Two evenings of improvised and experimental music with Lyndsey Cockwell, David Aylward, Pete Flood and Big Buddha (4 December) and Trio 27, Paul Hood and Ticklish (18). London Centurian, fortnightly Saturdays, 8.30pm, £4/£3, 020 8469 3612
Ascension New club spanning the avant garde with resident group Withoutlaw, DJ John The Postman and guests. Manchester Gullivers, fortnightly Thursdays, 0161 832 5899
Bullitt These are the breaks with DJ Vadim, Andy Smith, Ollie Teeba, Charlie Dark and Sahin Dellemann. London Dogstar, Tuesdays, 9pm-2.30am, free, 020 7733 7515
Club Sitar Funk Asian underground business with Matrix, The Earthtribe Sound System, State Of Bengal and Strings Of India. London Scala, 10 December, 10pm-5am

John Zorn

PHOTOS: THOMAS BRINKMANN, STEFAN [illegible] JOHN ZORN: TOM BENJAMIN


Chris Cutler

£8 £6 020 7833 2022
Cream Of Da Crop No caps trainers or bad attitudes welcome at this millennial breakbeat throwdown featuring Mikee B Ramsey & Fen Mike Ruffcut Lloyd Lady Kemi Jazzy D M-Flex Crew and many more of London's top DJs and MCs London Leisure Lounge 31 December 8pm-9am £65 020 7242 1345
Dreamachines The Islamic Diggers return to Soho with their beat generation fetishes London Tactical 1 December 7pm-11pm free 020 8693 3474
Duckie A Japanese night (complete with vegetarian sushi) at this music and performance event hosted by The Frank Chickens London Vauxhall Tavern 11 December 9pm-2am £4 020 7737 4043
Electronicage An evening of electromagnetic stethoscopy and ferromagnetic hysteresis with Disinformation Alex Paterson and Chris Cutler Alquimia and Peter Cusack plus DJing from Simon Hopkins London Spitz 1 December 8pm £7/£5 020 7392 9023
Fused Earth Beat Collective's mix of global fusion with Transglobal Underground Dhol Foundation and Pandit G Brentford Watermans Art Centre 11 December 10 30pm-3am £8 £6
Home Taping Club night hosted by downtempo merchants Sneaker Pimps London ICA 16 December 9pm-1am £5 £4 020 7930 3647
Hub 2 Improvised free-for all with Tom Jenkinson (aka Squarepusher), Steve Arguelles Reg Ashley Slater Andy Diagram and Jon Tye London Spitz 16 December 8pm-midnight £7 £5 020 7392 9023
Klinker Dada Improv space featuring Clive Bell & Susanna Ferrar (2 December) Phil Minton & Bob Cobbing Duo (9), Skip Kathy Spice and Second Nature (16) Wurzels Tribute (23) Sylvia Hallett (30), Birdyak Solojopo and City Pit (31) Janos Agosci and Chris Rambling (6 January) Paul Burwell and Lemon Squeezer (20), and Alan Dreagojevich Kathy Tyler and Christina Dachs (28) London Sussex Thursdays £4/£2 020 8800 9200
Kosmische The usual Krautrock-infested tomfoolery with a surprise appearance from Julian Cope plus Ubik Robert Hampson Horton Jupiter, a raffle and, er a theremin bra London Upstairs at the Garage, 18 December 7 30pm-3am £5 020 7607 1818
Kontact Cross-cultural DJ exchange programme between the UK, France and Japan with Mr Neveux, Bua and Fantastic Plastic Machine (15 December) and DJ Krush Le Tone and Voigt Kampf (12 January) London Annexe Wednesdays £6
Ninja Xmas Party Fun frolic and fruit cakes with Coldcut Dynamic Syncopation Strictly Kev, Mixmaster Morris J Swinscoe Ollie Teeba and MC Juice Aleem London Ormonds 8 December, 10pm-3 30am, £10/£8
NY Sushi Raw breakbeat stew with Deejay Punk Roc and Bryan Gee (3 December) Goldie, Grooverider and The Scratch Perverts (10) and residents (17) For New Year's Eve Sushi get raw with Grooverider Mickey Finn Scratch Perverts, 808 State and many other local DJs (31 December 8pm-6am £50/£45) Sheffield Unit Fridays 10pm-3 30am £5/£4 0114 267 1869
Perverted Science Three floors of beats and mayhem to rock Old Street with The Scratch Perverts GdoubleE Pete Herbert and The Pest & Spyna Workshop London 333 17 December, 10pm-5am £10/£6 020 7739 5949
Raya Night of eclecticism with Andrew Beck Simon Green, Rita Ray and DJ Deep London ICA 3 December, 8pm-1am £5/£4 020 7930 3647
Salad Butty A meeting place for the disparate musical cultures of Tyneside Newcastle Salsa Club, first Friday of the month, 8pm-late free, 0191 240 3815
Slap Stick Matthew Herbert unveils his soundtrack for the Buster Keaton movie *One Week* at this Bristol art venue Also appearing will be local violinist John Matthias whose crime sheet includes work with Radiohead Bristol Cube Cinema 9 December £6 0117 907 4190
Solo Experimental electronica with Mild Man Jan Daniel Weaver and JJ Howard Manchester Night & Day Cafe 8 December £3/£2 50 0161 796 1627
The Sprawl Cutting edge electronica with snd Si-{cut}db and BitTonic (9 December) and Capitol K and Sprawl All Stars (13 January) London Global Cafe 7 30pm-midnight £3/£2 020 7287 2242

Out There items for inclusion in the February issue should reach us by Friday 17 December
NB Listings information MUST include a contact phone number, start time and ticket price. Listings cannot be taken over the phone

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Radio

National

BBC Radio 1 97-99 FM

John Peel *Tuesdays/Thursdays 10 10pm-midnight* The best place to keep up with new rock indie Techno Jungle Electronica, dub and the legendary sessions
Gilles Peterson *Wednesdays 10pm-1am* Up- and downtempo beats, experimental drum n bass, funk psychedelic soul, and plenty more in between
Andy Kershaw *Thursdays midnight-2am* Raw musics and global sounds, including folk, roots reggae, out rock and more
Fabio & Grooverider *Fridays 2-4am* Two hours of vanguard drum 'n' bass
Westwood Rap Show *Fridays 11pm-2am/Saturdays 9pm-midnight* Tim's fast breaking HipHop tips

BBC Radio 3 90-93 FM

Jazz Century *Saturdays 6-6 30pm* Weekly survey of jazz history
Mixing It *Saturdays 10 45-11 30pm* Eclectic mix of new music and discourse from Robert Sandall and Mark Russell
Jazz On 3 *Saturdays 11 30pm-1am* Modern jazz recorded in session and concert

Regional

BBC Derby 94.2/95.3/104.5 FM, 1116 MW

Soundscapes *Sundays 3-6pm* Ashley Franklin plays instrumental electronica, contemporary classical/systems music, New Age and Ambient

BBC Greater London Radio (GLR) 94.9 FM

Destination In *Wednesdays 8-10 30pm* Ross Allen spins a motley morphing selection of new music, from spacey jazz and minimalism to electronica and leftfield pop
Charlie Gillett *Saturdays 7-9pm* Rock, roots dub World Music blues, R&B and more sounds of the city

BBC Lancashire 95.5/103.9/104.5 FM, 855 MW

On The Wire *Saturdays 12-2am* Steve Barker's freeform mix of dub, experimental electronics, out rock, free Improv and more

BBC Merseyside 95.8 FM, 1485 MW

The Late World Countdown *Sundays midnight-2am* Roger Hill's millennium mix of avant rock, psychedelia, warped Ambient and global gems in themed sequences

BBC Scotland 92.4-94.7 FM

From Bebop To HipHop *Wednesdays 8-9pm* David Sillars drops jazz and new beats
Beat Patrol *Sundays 8-9pm* Peter Aston plays independent music across the spectrum
Electronica *Sundays 9-10pm* Marc Percival airs the latest Techno and dance tracks

Cable Radio 89.8 FM (Milton Keynes)

The Garden Of Earthly Delights *Fridays 10pm-midnight* Shane Quentin's blend of avant rock to electronic exotica, with bizarre soundbites

Kiss 100 FM (London)

Dreem Teem *Sundays 6-8pm* Two-step breakbeats from the London duo
Paul Thomas *Sundays 3-5am* Experimental electronica mix
Patrick Forge *Sundays 10pm-midnight* Eclectic jazz-not-jazz mix
Frost and Hype *Sunday/Monday midnight-2am* Moce breakbeat that's chilly the most
Slipmatt & Friends *Mondays 2-4am* Jazz Jungle, cyber-soul breakbeats, electrified grooves from this lively bunch
Colin Dale *Wednesdays 2-4am* Minimal Techno and concrete House

Surf 107 FM (Brighton)

Totally Wired *Daily 11pm-1am* Eclectic selection of leftfield independent/dance tunes, laced with 60s/70s flashbacks
The Chill Factor *Sundays 5-7am* Clive Craske's continuous mix of drum n' bass, dub, psych-HipHop, classical, Improv and electronica

NB Schedules are likely to change over the New Year period. Check your local press for details
Links to Net radio broadcasts can be found on* The Wire *Website: www.dfuse.com/the-wire

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WEDNESDAY 19 JANUARY
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SATURDAY 22 JANUARY
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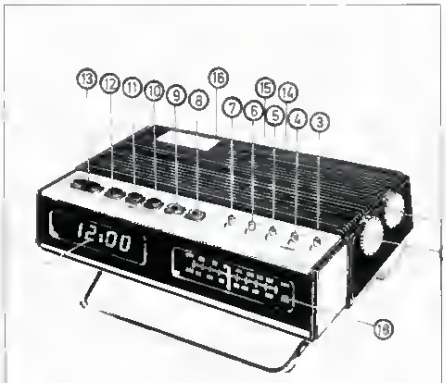

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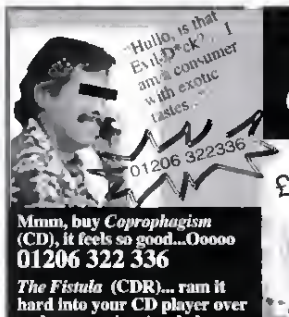

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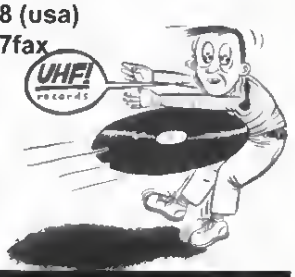

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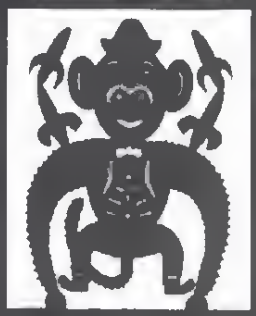

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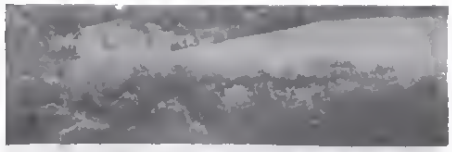

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THE WIRE

epiphanies

Cecil Taylor leads **Mark Sinker** on a journey to the outer limits of sound

It began in 1977, at secondhand: I knew before I heard a note of it that I'd love Cecil Taylor's music. In a jazz encyclopaedia I'd read of the pianist "zipping and unzipping the keyboard", but first contact came from a sideways leap out of bent chartpop Across Bowie's "Aladdin Sane", Mike Garson's cocktail piano cliches mutate towards cancerous splinters, which rock reviewer Charles Shaar Murray approvingly compared to Taylor. I needed to know more.

With other princes of the Utterly Out — Ornette, Coltrane, Beefheart — I was, I confess, puzzled by how tame they seemed against the buzz of advance promo. But Cecil — first heard on *Silent Tongues*, the recording of his 1974 Montreux Festival solo performance — did not disappoint. Perversely, I spent far more subsequent time addressing Coleman and the good Captain, battling to discover ways to hear their sound as deranged delight, learning tolerance for the well-meant overreactions of enthusiasts. And so my response to these others to this day sometimes seems suspect to me, post-fabricated out of a need to be wowed, or to seem weird; the pianoman, by contrast, I always knew I could trust, to swoop in, connect instantly, and transfigure. With Cecil, no need to fake it.

So I didn't visit often, though I dallied with his less demanding children — Von Schlippenbach, Tippett, Crispell, Shipp — and all too soon I was taking him for granted. The affair turned secondhand again, and stalled. Modernism's dirty secret: avant garde work requires the survival of the order it first flared against, or its full radicalism no longer properly registers. Mind switched to low, and just like those black Cultural Nationalists who voiced concern about Taylor's 'European' influences (because deep beneath their political bluster, they doubted an African-American artform could wrestle white tradition and win), I projected my own baffled timidity, and even dismay, onto an oeuvre I was no longer regularly checking.

The counter-force epiphany for me came with a CD full of what guitarist Stefan Jaworzyn has described as "Teletubbies-style verbal gibberish": *Chinampas*, issued in 1987 by the UK Leo label. At which point, things I'd known for years, but been too nervous to accept, came suddenly clear. Like so many sympathetic yet humour-free interviewers down the years, catching the edge of a Cecil tease but missing its meaning, I'd overlooked countless clues. The cover to *Silent Tongues* — featuring Cecil, winsome in glasses and woolly hat — I've now felt joy towards for some 20 years: in retrospect, the gulf between this absurdly cute sad-little-boy mugshot and the record itself expresses nothing if not irreverent glee. In the sleevenotes to the 1966 Blue Note release *Unit Structures*, dry crypto-Darmstadt analysis mutates into cut-ups and wicked Burroughsian war on grammar. On the 1985 small-orchestra set *Winged Serpent (Sliding Quadrants)*, and 1990's impishly superb *In Florescence*, and *Chinampas*, Taylor invokes Aztec gods — gorgeous, jagged, murderous deities more outrageously unsuited to worship even than the much-bothered Egyptian pantheon. Their presence among the grunts, rumbles and oblique exclamations punctuating *In Florescence* suggests a musician whose absolute confidence in his work frees him to kid, to plant the worry that it's a giant joke. Indeed, this is more than just flirtation — again and again he soars, eagle god turned trickster gremlin, way out over the abyss of the possible put-on, and never more gloriously than with the high-fired azteque concrete that makes up the piano-free *Chinampas*.

Cecil Taylor: playing at the piano

PHOTO VAL WILMER

Of course, the 'whitest' concert-hall piano virtuosos — and the composers that encouraged them — have courted official unrespectability when they became too flamboyant, too romantically individual, too inhumanly extreme or unplayable, from Liszt to Xenakis, from the robot-loving Conlon Nancarrow to Glenn 'uberneerd' Gould. But when piano-play turns into self-absorbed callisthenic workouts, when the musician is presented as some superfit but otherwise daffy street person, mazed into his own asides, gestures and solo dances, when the compositions are like architectural design brainstorm sessions for the living city-of-the-future, and this unlikely idiot savant dervish is busily, dizzily solving every possible urban conundrum, we may begin to realise why most orthodox criticism of Cecil favours lulling solemnity. For art fraud on so titanic a scale — so vastly vivid, so elaborately detailed, so whirlingly learned — is no less startling than the 'straight' work it seems to send up. Indeed, it's far more staggering, and even scary, in its implications — what kind of madman devotes his entire life-energies to purely anti-serious mayhem? For me, the only works in the avant garde canon that match Taylor's serene, omniscient cheek are *Finnegans Wake*, and *Vexations*, Satie's day-long hymn to absolute simpleton repetition.

As it was, Coltrane, all bruised earnestness and cosmic quest, became the poster child for jazz's New Thing, the model for what 'being taken seriously' would come to mean. Nobility? Self-denial? Avant garde transformation as a solemn, lonely, painful, search? Well, yes, but a glance at the lives of most known questers (knights errant, polar explorers) reveals quests as monuments to anti-domestic panic, with most seekers fleeing as much personal duty as they're pursuing. All across the slopes of art's Everests, a great deal of immature selfishness continues to mistake itself for the austere sublime. Much celebrated (rightly celebrated), Coltrane's natural grace of spirit and vast generosity served mostly to obscure how little imitated this was in Cultural Nationalist circles, and how repressed, repressive and reactionary the Cultural Nationalist version of radicalism quickly became.

By temperament, Taylor had chosen 'Out' before Ayler, Coltrane or even Coleman, playing 'free' years before this became the term for the play, his example encouraging each of them to take similar steps. He was always already Out, it was always already Play. His work, in its mischief-making badboy totality, has from the outset been not a quest but a masque, wherein the daunting modernist massif and its pervasively silly, naughty, niggling parody coincide. I love this music because it makes me happy — and it makes me happy because it refuses to sidestep, to underrate or even to disrespect the tireless teasing perversity at the core of human behaviour, because even if it wanted to shill for pompous fraudulence, self-seriousness or fast-track fake enlightenment, it just couldn't.

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